FOR THOSE WHO WERE RAISED ON ROCK

ROCK CANDY

August - September 2021

LEGS DIAMOND
WHY WEREN'T THEY MASSIVE?

SLADE
THE AMERICAN DREAM?

JOHN WAITE
THE MAKING OF HIS CLASSIC 'NO BRAKES' ALBUM

MIKE VARNEY
HEAD OF SHRED

MONSTER MAGNET
"IT'S NOT MEANT FOR MASS CONSUMPTION"

PAUL GILBERT
RAPID FIRE RECALL

38 SPECIAL
CAN SUVVERN AND AOR MIX?

BRYAN ADAMS
AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE!

STYX

ROCK'N'ROLL RENEGADES!
EVERY BAND MEMBER INTERVIEWED

SURVIVOR

JIM PETERIK
"'EYE OF THE TIGER' WAS THE LUCKIEST BREAK OF MY LIFE!"

ISSN 2514-0043
27
9 772514 004003
Rock Candy 27 £7.99

Need Help With Your Next Release?

Email Us at me@mikebrandvold.com
or Call Us at 1-415-997-8483

Our Services Include:

Release Strategy • Playlisting • Fan Growth
Press • Radio • Social Media • Label Services

Partial Clientele:

ACCEPT • KISS • RON KEEL • DREAM THEATER
LEATHER LEONE • JASON BECKER • VICIOUS RUMORS
METAL HALL OF FAME • DARK STAR RECORDS • FIERCE HEART

ROCK CANDY

WELCOME

THIS ISSUE PROVIDES A fascinating collection of interviews with all the current members of US pomp-meisters Styx, a band that's been consistently underrated by mainstream-loving hipsters more concerned with what's cool. Who cares what they think? A sensational new studio album 'Crash Of The Crown' has confirmed this band's legendary status. It's a record that unashamedly takes its cue from Styx's vintage era of the late '70s and early '80s, utilising the same sounds and styles that delivered multi-platinum success over 40 years ago. 'Crash Of The Crown' couples great sounds with great songs, meaning Styx have produced a record that's totally fit for purpose. The band also has great management in Charlie Brusco, who's looked after a number of key '70s Southern rock acts including Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Outlaws. With talk of Styx coming to Europe at some point soon our ears are definitely twitching.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Rock Candy Mag* you get the lowdown on some talented characters including Doogie White, Conny Bloom, and Mike Varney. Varney is the man who single-handedly brought the guitar virtuoso back into focus during the early '80s. Mike's unerring ear uncovered a number of major plank-spanking proponents such as Yngwie Malmsteen, Paul Gilbert, Marty Friedman, Jason Becker, Vinnie Moore, and Richie Kotzen, all of whom have gone on to redefine the style and set standards for the instrument. We've also managed to secure a great interview with Jim Peterik, the man behind chart toppers Survivor. Jim is a fascinating character, having co-written Survivor hits such as 'Burning Heart', 'Eye Of The Tiger', and 'The Search Is Over'. But less well known is his songwriting activity for other acts. Jim's also penned successful numbers for 38 Special, Blackhawk, Cheap Trick, REO Speedwagon, and Sammy Hagar. He's a prolific man with an unlimited appetite for creating music of the highest order.

No band has ever been more underrated than Legs Diamond. AOR aficionado Dave Reynolds has been fighting their corner for many years, and now he's hooked up with band leader Mike Prince and drummer Jeff Poole to examine why LD never broke through. Finally, at *Rock Candy Mag* we agree to a man (and woman) that John Waite is one of the finest vocalists of the last 40-odd years. John scored big time with The Babys and Bad English, but he'll forever be remembered for his number one solo hit single 'Missing You'. John has always been a bit of a maverick, preferring to let his music do the talking. But Howard Johnson has pinned him down for an all-encompassing interview focusing on that song and its parent album 'No Brakes'.

And there you have it. We're hopefully coming out of the pandemic now and back into the light. Thank God for music.

Derek Oliver – Master Of Mayhem
derekoliver@rockcandymag.com

E-mail: editorial@rockcandymag.com
Website: www.rockcandymag.com

***Rock Candy Mag* subscriptions**
Go to *www.rockcandymag.com/subscriptions*

www.rockcandymag.com created and maintained by Ross Sampson Solutions

Printed by Sterling Press Limited, Kettering Venture Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 6SU, England.
Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Limited, 3rd Floor, 161 Marsh Wall, London, E14 9AP, England.

Copyright: Rock Candy Magazine Ltd, 2021
No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the express consent of the owner.

THIS ISSUE'S BIG QUESTION – WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BAND WITH THE LETTER X IN THEIR NAME?

THE TEAM
Owner and Publisher: Derek Oliver
King's X
Editor: Howard Johnson
Styx in their pomp!
Editor At Large: Malcolm Dome
Styx
Art Director: Andy Hunns
Saxon, of course!
Production Editor: Louise Johnson
T.Rex
Creative Direction: Julia Melanie Goode
Styx
Web Guy: Ross Sampson
Styx
Facebook Captain: John Nicholson
Brand X
Social Media Guru: Michael Brandvold
Styx

CONTRIBUTORS
Jason Arnopp
Exodus
Rob Evans
Xeron
Jerry Ewing
XTC
Giles Hamilton
Sex Pistols
Jon Hotten
King's X
Dave Ling
Styx
Dave Reynolds
Britny Fox, closely followed by Rox!
Xavier Russell
Styx

PHOTOGRAPHY
Getty Images
IconicPix
Rich Galbraith
Bill O'Leary/Timeless Concert Images
Mark Weiss

Photo: Getty Images/Paul Natkin

ROCK CANDY MAG ISSUE 27 CONTENTS

UPFRONT

6 FROZEN IN TIME – BRYAN ADAMS
It's 1975, and our favourite clean-cut Canadian AOR superstar is rocking an entirely different look!

8 STEP BACK IN TIME – AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1984
We've cranked up the heavy metal Tardis and have set controls for 1984 where Metallica are coming of age with 'Ride The Lightning', fans are debating whether that year's Monsters Of Rock line-up is the best ever, and singer Brian Howe is revealing his rags-to-riches story after joining Ted Nugent's band.

14 MY FIRST GIG – MICHAEL KELLY SMITH OF BRITNY FOX
Guitarist Michael remembers the life-changing properties of a 1973 Alice Cooper show in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

15 INTRODUCING... SWEET CRISIS
Rock Candy Mag big boss Derek Oliver gets excited about these emerging British rockers.

16 PERSON OF INTEREST – DOOGIE WHITE
He's sung with Rainbow, Yngwie Malmsteen, and Michael Schenker, but he can still drink in a pub unnoticed. We enjoy a chit-chat with rock's most unassuming frontman.

Exclusive interview

Albums available on *Rock Candy* Records

Want to comment on anything in *Rock Candy Mag*? Email us:
Editorial@rockcandymag.com

FEATURES

18 DARK DAYS – SLADE IN AMERICA
They were huge in their native Britain, and with great songs and a memorable image surely Slade would take the US by storm in the mid-'70s. Well not so fast... Malcolm Dome talks to guitarist Dave Hill and bassist Jim Lea about how their plans to conquer the States never quite worked out.

24 EYEWITNESS – THE MAKING OF JOHN WAITE'S 'NO BRAKES'
Editor HoJo catches up with the legendary English singer to get the full story behind the breakthrough album that provided Waite with his monster hit 'Missing You' back in '84.

32 OVERLOOKED – LEGS DIAMOND
Dave Reynolds hunts down drummer Jeff Poole and keyboardist/guitarist Michael Prince and goes deep on a real critic's fave act that never got its just rewards.

40 THE *ROCK CANDY* Q&A – CONNY BLOOM OF ELECTRIC BOYS
The Swedish guitarist and vocalist on funk metal, Ginger Wildheart, and why the '80s didn't entirely rock...

42 JIM PETERIK
The man behind Survivor's 'Eye Of The Tiger' and a truckload more hit singles explains the art of selling rock music to Jon Hotten.

50 COVER STORY – STYX
In celebration of a cracking new album and a marvellous musical heritage, *Rock Candy Mag* dedicates 16 pages to Chicago legends Styx. Dive in for interviews with every current band member, along with personal appraisals of the four classic albums Styx made between '77 and '81.

66 INSIDE STORY – MONSTER MAGNET
An extraordinary tale of an extraordinary life. Monster Magnet mainman Dave Wyndorf lets down his hair.

74 RAPID FIRE RECALL – PAUL GILBERT
The guitar legend talks guitars (what else?), Mr. Big, hearing problems, and howling with his six-year-old son!

80 UNCOVERED – MIKE VARNEY AND SHRAPNEL RECORDS
The man who popularised shred on how he built his empire one guitar album at a time.

PRODUCT

86 REAPPRAISED – 'SPECIAL FORCES' BY 38 SPECIAL
Can Suvvern rock and AOR really be happy bedfellows? This is the album where the band from Jacksonville, Florida, tried to find out...

88 STRIKTLY FOR KONNOISSEURS – T2 AND AIRRACE
Let's go down the dusty tunnel of rock obscurity and shine a light on two more forgotten classics.

90 ROCK CANDY REISSUE – SILENT RAGE
We're bringing the music of these Gene Simmons discoveries back to life with a lovingly crafted remaster of their 1989 'Don't Touch Me There' album.

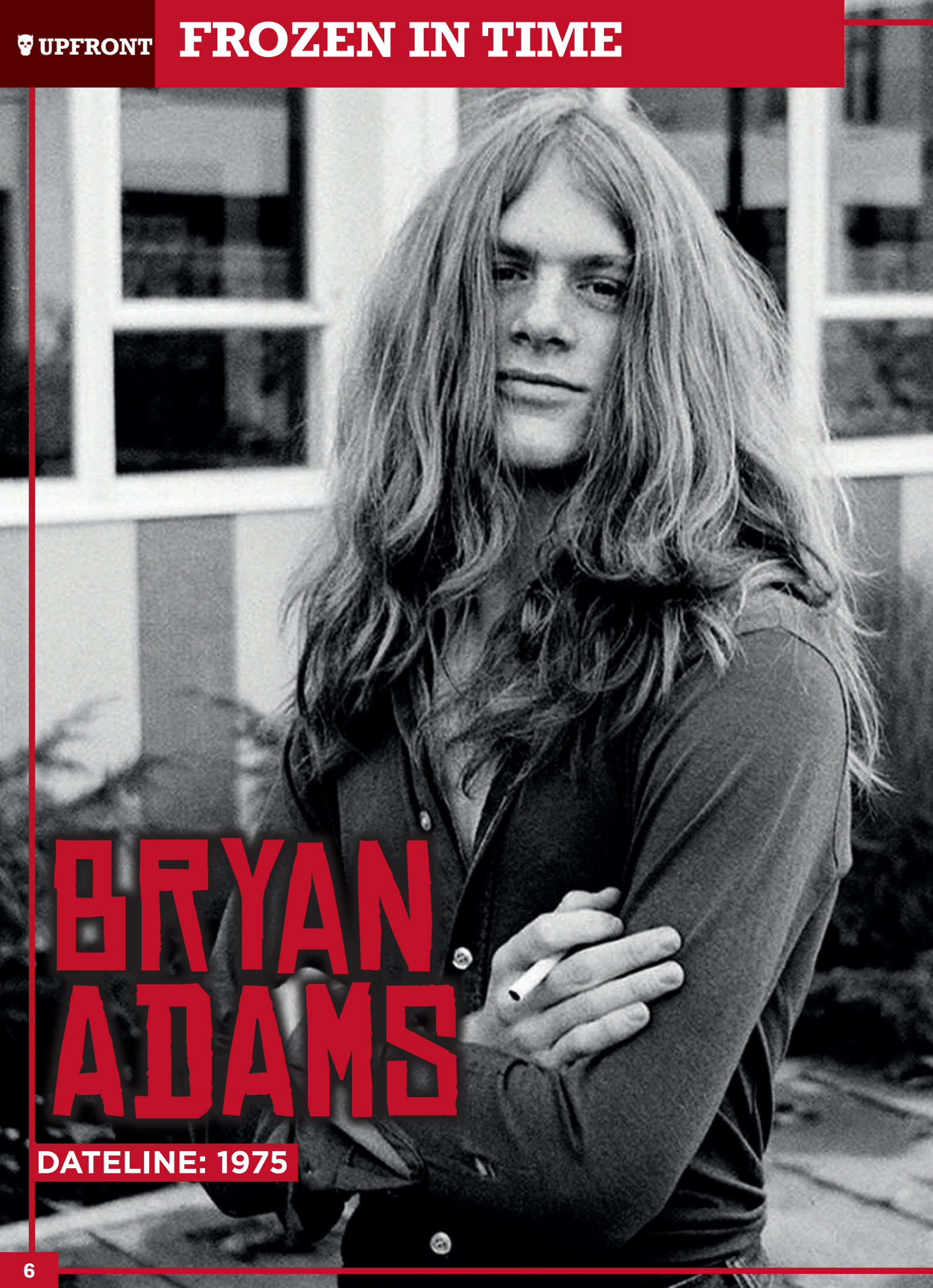
91 REVIEWS
There's plenty of rock product for you to check out this issue, including releases by Metallica, Motörhead, Joe Bonamassa, and Buckcherry.

98 CROSSWORD
It's that time again! Can you handle the rock and rollingest crossword of them all?

99 SUBSCRIBE TO *ROCK CANDY MAGAZINE*
The best rock mag on the planet delivered direct to your door!

Cover photo: Todd Gallopo and Styx. Contents page photos: Courtesy of UME; Getty Images/Martyn Goodacre; Jason Quigley; Bill O'Leary/Timeless Concert Images

FROZEN IN TIME



BRYAN ADAMS

DATELINE: 1975

Everywhere I go, the kids wanna rock...

I FIRST MET BRYAN Adams in London way back in 1982. He was in London promoting his second album, 'You Want It, You Got It', that had come out the previous year, and was so unknown in the UK at the time that when I met him at his record company A&M's offices, he cracked a joke about *not* being Bryan Adams and how I must have been mistaken when I first identified him. Bryan was young and unassuming, he had a lot of acne, and he bought me a kebab. He seemed like a good guy.

He had already begun to establish himself as a man who knew how to write radio hits, though nobody at that time had any idea the 22-year-old Canadian from Kingston, Ontario would go on to become one of the most successful artists of all time, selling over 100 million albums worldwide.

YET DESPITE – or possibly because of – all that mega-success, plenty of rock fans have always had a hard time accepting Bryan Adams. His massive breakthrough album, 1984's 'Reckless', featured a fistful of hit tunes including 'Summer Of '69', 'Run To You', and 'It's Only Love' that would utterly dominate American rock radio. And yet Adams was somehow never accorded the same respect as contemporary hit makers including Journey and REO Speedwagon.

Maybe it was something to do with his short-haired, white T-shirted, boy-next-door look. He certainly didn't have the same over-the-top, long-haired visual appeal as most of the stadium bands of the day. Who knows for sure? But what is certain is that many rockers never fully embraced Bryan the way they perhaps should have done. Of course when the '90s came around all the rock stars started cutting their hair short, so maybe you could argue that Bryan was simply ahead of the curve!

ANYWAY, THIS rare photo, taken in 1975 when Bryan was a callow 15 year old, should go at least some way toward settling the debate as to whether Bryan Guy Adams is a genuine rocker or not once and for all. Just look at that hair! And the cigarette casually cradled in the right hand. This is not the look of a man who is entirely unaware of the work of Led Zeppelin or Deep Purple!

Bryan admitted as much to our very own Xavier Russell recently, when he told him, "By the time I was 13 it was pretty much hard rock all the way for me." But Adams wasn't only drawn to the bombast. He also loved the way that bands like Zeppelin could embrace acoustic music in amongst all that overdriven *sturm und drang*. Perhaps this is why he was so adept at getting radio to embrace his own work.

"I BELIEVE I've got a lot of potential," he told me all those years ago in '82. "Because I combine heavy metal and pop. I can't really help the pop influences, because I write strong melodies. It's a new direction that could really be very successful."

Do you know what? I think young Bryan might have been on to something!

HOWARD JOHNSON

Photo: Courtesy of Bryan Adams

STEP BACK IN TIME

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER 1984

ROCK CANDY'S DAVE LING LEAFS THROUGH THE BACK PAGES OF THE UK ROCK PRESS TO BRING THE BIG NEWS ITEMS OF THE DAY BACK TO LIFE AND ANALYSE HOW THOSE STORIES REALLY PLAYED OUT...

The Metallica line-up that recorded the 'Ride The Lightning' album. L-R: Kirk Hammett (guitar), James Hetfield (vocals and guitar), Lars Ulrich (drums), Cliff Burton (bass)

METALLICA BRING 'LIGHTNING' TO THE NATIONS

DATELINE: 26 JULY-8 AUGUST 1984

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

BACK IN THE MID-1980S thrash metal as we know it today was still taking baby steps. Metallica had released their game-changing debut album, 'Kill 'Em All', in July of 1983. But to many fans of mainstream metal, thrash remained little more than an unfunny joke.

In the summer of 1984, though, Metallica's second album 'Ride The Lightning' appeared – and everything changed. *Kerrang!*'s Xavier Russell had been among the band's earliest champions, and by way of celebration the magazine allowed him the space to offer a forensic appraisal of the new record that he rated as "one of the greatest, most original heavy metal albums of all time."

SECOND TIME around Metallica had mixed up the formula and, amusingly, Russell theorised that maybe the four band members – whom he knew well – could have sat around a conference table and said, "Hey, let's not just thrash out this time. How about a couple of slow [numbers], a few mid-pacers and, just to keep the headbangers happy, a few thrashers as well?"

Russell decided that he'd review 'Ride The Lightning' by running through the album track by track, gauging the thrash quotient of each number in miles per hour. Therefore opener 'Fight Fire With Fire' was listed as "Speed: total thrash, 100mph," while the more leisurely 'Fade To Black' was judged as: "Speed: snooze, 15mph." Elsewhere, 'For Whom The Bell Tolls' rated at "mid-pocket, catchy" and a mere "50mph."

REGARDLESS OF speed variations, there's no doubt that the changes Metallica made to their sound paid off. 'Ride The Lightning' presented a new and undeniably superior version of the band. Russell nominated rhythm guitarist James Hetfield as "the most improved vocalist of 1984," wondering aloud, "Is that Steve Perry I hear on 'Fade To Black'? But don't worry, our heavy Smirnoff drinker can still do a fine Arthur Mullard [1970s British comedy actor] impersonation when he wants to; just check out 'Fight Fire With Fire'."

Russell's other nomination in the "most improved" category was the band's lead guitarist Kirk Hammett. "Poor Hammett has had a rough ride, especially from

Photos: Getty Images/Fin Costello; Getty Images/Ross Marino/Icon And Image

the guitarist he replaced, Dave Mustaine, who has accused Kirk of simply cloning his original riffs. Well, clear your ears out mate, and lend an ear to, say, 'Trapped Under Ice' or 'Fight Fire With Fire'. Kirk's scorching solos really do burn."

Russell did voice reservations over one song, 'Fade To Black', deeming it "over-long and trying to be too clever." Amusingly, he noted that Metallica "really should leave slow build-up numbers to the likes of Molly Hatchet."

WHILE THE band themselves would later admit to having deep reservations over one number, 'Escape', which they wrote in the studio to complete the album, Russell described the song as "AOR-ish," admiring its "catchy riff" and predicting that it was "another one for American radio to pick up on." Metallica would not perform 'Escape' live until 2012 as part of an 'in its entirety' 'Ride The Lightning' show. They've never played it since.

AS SOMEBODY fortunate to have seen Metallica at most stages of their career, including with Dave Mustaine on guitar, few were better qualified than Xavier Russell to observe the quantum leap the band had made with 'Ride The Lighting'. In his summing-up comments, the *K!* man sounded a little like a proud father when he proclaimed: "If this album doesn't do it for the band, then heavy metal is in a sorry state of affairs."

ALBUMS

LIGHTNING RAIDERS

Pic Pic Controls

METALLICA: not just a case of thrash, bang, wallop.

METALLICA
'Ride The Lightning'
(Music For Nations MFN 27)

HEADBANGERS OF the world unite! Sound-proof the walls, get in a six-pack of beer and sit back and listen to what I consider one of the greatest, most original, Heavy Metal albums of all time!

The first time I spun 'Ride The Lightning' it sent a shiver straight down the back of me 'Gregory Peck', and 80 plays later I'm still getting these lightning bolts flashing before my eyes. Even Kerrang!'s own demon of the night, Dr Doom, has admitted that the album is slowly possessing him.

The trouble with so much Heavy Metal these days is that it's all very predictable. It does get a bit tedious when you can guess the chord changes, and that was pretty much the case with Metallica's 'Kill 'Em All' opus; despite its brilliance, it was pretty much thrash, thrash and more thrash. This time around I was expecting more of the same, but no, shock horror, the Metallicers actually sat around a conference table and said, 'hey, let's not just thrash out this time. How about a couple of slowies, a few mid-pacers and, just to keep the bangers happy, a few thrashers as well'. And would you Adam & Eve it, the end result is nothing short of breathtaking, with something for everyone.

'Ride The Lightning' was recorded at Kopenhagen's renowned Sweet Silence Studio, which is fast becoming the 'in' place for Metal bands to use. Like Toto, Metallica are perfectionists when it comes to working in the studio, which could explain why there are two award-winning performances on 'RTL'.

The nominees are: James Hetfield for 'most improved vocalist of '84'. Is that a heavy Steve Perry I hear on 'Fade to Black'? But don't worry, our heavy Smirnoff drinker can still do a fine Arthur Mullard impersonation when he wants to; just check out 'Fight Fire With Fire', although after hearing Hetfield belt out his lines I would have to rename the tune 'Fight Vodka, With Bourbon'.

The other nominee is Kirk Hammett for 'most improved axe-man of '84'. Poor Hammett has really had a rough ride, especially from the guitarist he replaced, Dave Mustaine (who, by the way, co-wrote the 'Call Of Ktulu' and 'Ride The Lightning' tracks). He has accused Hammett in print of simply cloning his original riffs. Well Mustaine, klean yer ears out mate and lend an ear to, say, 'Trapped Under Ice' or 'Fight Fire With Fire'; Kirk's scorching solos really do burn – ouch!

Anyway, enough of this waffle (my words exactly–Ed). Let me now give you a blow by blow, or should that read thrash by thrash, account of what each tune's about. . .

Side One:
'Fight Fire With Fire': Speed: total thrash, 100 mph.
After a very tongue-in-cheek intro, this kut just smokes. I had to check to make sure I wasn't running nuclear war; yes folks, Metallica go politics!

'Ride The Lightning': Speed: semi-thrash, 60 mph.
Tuneful riffing, and some scorching lead guitar. This one's all about a dude who's been sent to the electric chair for ligging too much. It deals with the man's thoughts prior to him 'kicking the bucket'. A sad piece of mayhem, but a good 'un.

'For Whom The Bell Tolls':
Speed: mid-pocket, catchy, 50 mph.
Without doubt the strongest kut on the album. Forget AC/DC's 'Back In Black' cos this is where it's at. Not have I heard such a catchy tune; if this song gets picked up by the FM stations in America it could well break the band.

'FWTF' was inspired by the Ernest Hemingway novel of the same moniker, which probably explains why the song is so strong. An absolute barnstormer!

'Fade To Black': Speed: snooze, 15 mph.
Weakest song on the album; it's overlong and tries to be too clever. However, cub reporter Malcolm Doom reckons that this is the LP's winner, so there you are. Metallica really should leave slow build-up numbers to the likes of Molly Hatchet.

Side Two:
'Trapped Under Ice': Speed: total blurrrr, 85 mph.
The perfect way to open Side Two – a nice piece of catch-thrash with more brilliant soloing from Captain Kirk. 'Trapped' deals with cryogenics and a poor gent who wakes up trapped under ice.

'Escape': Speed: AORish, 45 mph.
Yet another one for American radio to pick up on. As I've said before, I do like a catchy riff and this song is full of 'em. If you feel trapped by the system and the way it works then you too can rebel by turning this song up as loud as your stereo will permit.

'Creeping Death': Speed: Megadeath (oh-joke), 85 mph.
Second best song on the album, I mean heavy man! If you're into religion, you'll like this one. What a cruel geezer that Moses was, putting a nasty plague on the Pharoah and his son. Great lyrics on this kut.

'Call of Ktulu': Speed: cruising, 40 mph.
A truly epic instrumental that just builds and builds, rather like the H.P. Lovecraft novel it's based on. You don't need lyrics, the music says it all!
So there you have it folks. And, like Mangwar, Metallica have managed to stay away from the

CONTINUES PAGE 12

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT 'Ride The Lightning' caused many heavy metal fans to sit up and take Metallica seriously. The band was no longer a one-trick pony. Now this was an act that wasn't afraid of mixing tempos and was capable of writing songs that bore no passing resemblance to a road drill with the controls stuck on 'maximum'.

Talking in the year of the album's release, drummer Lars Ulrich commented: "The difference between 'Ride The Lightning' and 'Kill 'Em All' is that 'Kill 'Em All' [felt like] one complete track. On 'Ride The Lightning', not all of the tracks are played 'Metal Militia'-style [super-rapid] speed. The thing we realised is that you don't have to depend on speed to be powerful and heavy. Songs like 'For Whom The Bell Tolls' and 'Ride The Lighting' reflect that attitude."

IN 1990 Metallica were about to break into the mainstream with their celebrated 'Black Album', a record that pushed many of the themes first explored on 'Ride The Lightning' to their logical conclusion. What is particularly telling is that at that time Lars Ulrich stated, "Most people say that 'Master Of Puppets' [released in '86] was the definitive Metallica album, [but] I think I would take 'Ride The Lightning' as my favourite."

STEP BACK IN TIME

MOR '84. THE GREATEST DONINGTON EVER?

DATELINE: 19 SEPTEMBER 1984

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

CONCEIVED AS A ONE-off, single-day festival of metal, the Monsters Of Rock series began in the UK in 1980 and proved so popular that it ran for a further 17 years, albeit with enforced cancellations in 1989 and 1993. MOR's reputation as the best festival in the country that gave birth to heavy metal music meant it attracted the biggest names in rock. And many fans will argue that although larger crowds rolled up to attend later events, the fifth edition at Castle Donington, which took place on 18 August 1984, was the Big Daddy of them all.

***KERRANG!* HAD** dispatched a four-man reviewing team to Donington Park, and *Rock Candy Mag* boss Derek Oliver was *in situ* for an early start from opening act Mötley Crüe. Making their UK debut, the red hot Los Angelinos appeared a full half-hour before the time they were supposed to be on stage. Despite being greeted with "a little apprehension," the Crüe soon had the crowd eating out of their hands. Oliver wrote that "their success Stateside hasn't been built on image alone." They were "tighter and heavier than any other LA act you care to mention," he added, the likes of Quiet Riot rendered "simply laughable in comparison."

Perhaps unexpectedly, the next *Kerrang!* reviewer up, Mick Wall, considered Accept "the best band I saw all day. All of those US stadia gigs that Accept have been doing have honed their act into the ideal vehicle for visual enticement at festivals as large as this one."

Before his arrival at Donington Park Mark Putterford had considered Y&T mediocre, and he left feeling the same way.

"Dave Meniketti is a fine guitarist and he really deserves to be in a better band than this," Putterford wrote, while also adding that the San Franciscans "didn't deserve the sickening bombardment of bottles they got from a number of prize prats [idiots] in the crowd."

MICK WALL returned from the VIP area to cast his eye over Gary Moore, still busy touring the previous year's 'Victims Of The Future' album. The former Thin Lizzy guitarist whipped up a "heat-infected" crowd with 'Empty Rooms', 'Murder In The Skies', 'Victims Of The Future' and the hit single 'Parisienne Walkways', though interest faded somewhat when Moore and his band revisited 'Shapes Of Things' by The Yardbirds and Free's 'Wishing Well'.

"Gary Moore will always rate among the finest guitar players in the world, his blues playing I find particularly moving," Wall said. "He just needs to churn out a few more classics of his own and forget about the covers."

Derek Oliver felt that Ozzy Osbourne "stole the show." Third on the bill, and with a band that included Jake E. Lee on guitar, Osbourne "crushed his festival contemporaries." Over the course of a 13-song set, which included 'I Don't Know', 'Over The Mountain',

'Rock 'N' Roll Rebel', 'Bark At The Moon', 'Steal Away (The Night)', 'Crazy Train', and Black Sabbath's 'Iron Man', Oliver felt that Lee "trashed just about every other guitarist featured on the menu, except maybe Mr Moore." Ozzy, meanwhile, injected "more effort and exuberance into his performance than the rest of the bill mustered throughout the whole day."

AND SO it fell to Dave Dickson to review the final two acts. And the writer was not impressed by what he saw. Dickson tore into special guests Van Halen, bemoaning Edward Van Halen's "15-minute" guitar solo, as well as the fact that Ed's drumming brother Alex played a solo of his own after just two numbers.

"Where I come from, that's taking the piss," Dickson seethed. "There were too many solos [and] too few songs – only 12 in the whole [85-minute] set," the writer said. "By the end of the day they'd run out of solos and songs to play – or at least ones that David Lee Roth knew the words to." The verdict was brutal. "[This] was a joke [performance] from a joke band."

Perhaps we should have known that Dickson was going to be no kinder to headliners AC/DC when he began his critique of the Donington headliners with the words: "I preferred AC/DC when they were still a punk band." The group, now featuring Simon Wright on drums, were the first act to headline the event twice, though Dickson felt it pertinent to point out that in his view the band had gone "downhill all the way" since singer Bon Scott's death in 1980. He felt "no warmth or feeling of community coming from the stage: Brian Johnson barely spoke to his audience and there were long, anguished silent gaps between the songs.

"What was wrong with AC/DC's performance at Donington was that it lacked heart," Dickson suggested, claiming that the show missed "a sense of spectacle, a sense of occasion, any semblance that this was anything other than just another AC/DC performance."

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

THE ESTIMATES SUGGEST THAT 45,000 fans filled the Donington Park racetrack that sunny summer's day 37 years ago. Surely no more than a handful would have agreed with Dave Dickson's withering takedown of the show's biggest stars, even though the thorny subject of which band triumphed as top dogs of Monsters '84 still fuels heated debate. *Kerrang!*'s review of the day wasn't particularly positive overall, but the general consensus nowadays is that MOR '84 was quite possibly the greatest Donington of them all.

In what turned out to be their final UK show with vocalist David Lee Roth, did Van Halen's showbiz pizazz allow them to pip AC/DC at the post? Or, as Derek Oliver claimed, was Ozzy's the day's greatest performance?

Angus Young headlining at MOR '84

AC/DC, WHO would return to Donington to top the bill once more in 1991, couldn't care less about negative critiques, of course. Lower down the bill, though, egos were a little more sensitive. In a 2005 interview, Dave Meniketti told me that Y&T took the missiles thrown at them to heart. "Mostly the show went well, but there was a lot of frustration backstage," he said. As a consequence of such treatment Y&T wouldn't play in Britain again for almost two decades.

IN 1996, the final year of Monsters Of Rock as we knew it, Ozzy proved his longevity by co-headlining with Kiss on a bill that now offered two stages to choose from. The times they were a-changing, and in 2003 the single-day Monsters Of Rock was reinvented as the Download Festival, complete with multiple stages and younger bands spread over multiple days. In 2006 Monsters Of Rock was revived at the Milton Keynes Bowl for a bill topped by Deep Purple. But it's without a doubt those Castle Donington Monsters Of Rock memories that will live forever...

FIELDS OF FIRE

Kerrang!'s festival four get to grips with Donington '84 and a cast(le) of thousands.

MONSTERS OF ROCK FESTIVAL, Castle Donington

DAVE LEE ROTH (VH)

CONTINUES PAGE 45

VAN HALEN

Photos: IconicPix/Ray Palmer Archive; IconicPix/PG Brunelli

STEP BACK IN TIME

Brian Howe performing with Ted Nugent in 1984

UNKNOWN HOWE JOINS NUGENT

DATELINE: 9-22 AUGUST 1984

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO be the lead singer of a band run by a rock'n'roll wildman like Ted Nugent? With a new album entitled 'Penetrator' nestling in the racks, *Kerrang!* sent Malcolm Dome to meet Brian Howe and find out.

Back in 1984 Howe was a new name on the music scene. Cracking gags from the off, Brian informed Dome that he was "a struggling male model for Mothercare about two years ago, still learning my craft."

The reality was the English singer from Portsmouth had sung with a local band called Shy (not to be confused with the Birmingham group of the same name) before joining a later incarnation of Hartlepool outfit White Spirit, which had once featured soon-to-be Iron Maiden guitarist Janick Gers. Howe sent a demo of his own songs to Atlantic Records in New York, and when a reply wasn't forthcoming he promptly forgot all about it. And then one day he received a phone call...

"Someone from Atlantic rang to say they liked the songs very much, but felt there was nothing to be done with me as a solo artist," Howe explained. "However, would I fancy becoming Ted Nugent's new vocalist? At first I was a bit dubious, but I flew to New York, heard the numbers being put together for 'Penetrator' and thought they were great... the rest is history."

HAVING RECENTLY completed a four-month US tour, the Howe-fronted Nugent band was proving to be quite a success. Around the world 'Penetrator' had shifted twice as many copies as its 1982 predecessor 'Nugent', though Howe admitted British statistics were "very disappointing." A mere 2,000 copies had been sold there, which was less than 'Nugent'. This was in spite of Nugent and band having played a date at London's Hammersmith Odeon on 29 February 1984. Like Howe, Dome believed the record's fortunes would have improved with the backing of a full UK tour, and not just a one-off show. "I'm trying to persuade Ted to come over again very soon and this time to bring the full American show, taking it across the country," Brian confided.

Nugent had sung on four of the 10 'Penetrator' tracks. Dome felt that Ted had disrespected his new partner at Hammersmith by ending the main set with Howe offstage.

"There was nothing sinister," the singer replied. "A lot of the classics [sung by Ted] were lumped together at the end of the set. I don't play an instrument like [predecessors] Charlie Huhn or Derek St Holmes, [so] I had to go offstage. Hopefully, when the next album comes out there will be enough good material to ensure that the set features the 'new' Nugent, and the problem won't arise again."

Howe was man enough to admit that the Hammersmith gig had been "a great disappointment." Having just returned from some European dates supporting Judas Priest the band "hadn't worked things out properly, and were still feeling our way [as headliners]."

ASKED ABOUT life on the road with Nugent, Howe explained: "Ted is a complete lunatic, yet still rather sane if that makes sense. He's an incredibly shrewd businessman, but the things that happen are unbelievable. If I told you some of the stuff we got up to I doubt you'd consider them factual.

"For instance, in Germany, Ted raced his Mercedes at 80 miles an hour down the autobahn – backwards! Needless to say, the gearbox blew up. Then in New York Ted and I had a race in our separate Mercedes. We managed to hit the Brooklyn Bridge and then he went smack into the side of a bus. By the end of the tour we'd managed to wreck so many hire cars I'm sure Hertz will never rent us another vehicle."

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

ALTHOUGH HOWE SPOKE IN detail about working on a new album with Ted, by the time 'Little Miss Dangerous' emerged two years later the singer had already found a better gig as frontman of Bad Company.

After completing the world tour for 'Penetrator' Howe received a call from Mick Jones of Foreigner, who was helping Bad Company men Mick Ralphs and Simon Kirke assemble a new group. With Howe on board a new-look Bad Co. – without Paul Rodgers, of course – would go on to achieve serious success.

Howe's second album with the group, 1988's 'Dangerous Age', sold half a million copies in the United States. But it was 1990's platinum 'Holy Water' that really established this line-up of the band as a genuine commercial force. Howe's relationship with Ralphs and Kirke was always difficult, though, and 1992's 'Here Comes Trouble' proved to be his last recording with the group.

BRIAN HOWE subsequently released solo albums, the most recent of which was 2010's 'Circus Bar'. Sadly on 6 May 2020 Brian suffered a fatal cardiac arrest in Florida at the age of 66.

HOWE NOW

TED NUGENT'S British-born vocalist BRIAN HOWE (below, centre) reflects on his riotous life with "the greatest showman in the world". By MALCOLM DOME.

"Ted Nugent's been playing for 20 years; he's a real rock 'n' roller. I reckon that my 'n' roller. I reckon that my will wind up dying onstage" – Brian Howe.

Despite his era being somewhat erased from the band's history by the return of Paul Rodgers, Howe was always proud of the role he played in helping keep the Bad Company name alive during the 1990s.

"Of course I am," he told me in 2004. "We worked our way back up to arena-headlining status... that's one hell of achievement."

SNIPPETS – SHORT, SHARP SHOCKS FROM AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1984

BLACK SABBATH INTRODUCE DAVID DONATO

DATELINE: 26 JULY-8 AUGUST 1984
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

"I always had a [mental] picture of what the right singer in Sabbath should be – and it was me," claimed David Donato as the native of Huntingdon Beach, California appeared to be taking over from Ian Gillan. Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi would later claim that despite recording demos together, Donato had misunderstood the situation and had never actually got past the audition stage.

'VOA' STANDS FOR 'VERY ORDINARY ALBUM'

DATELINE: 9-22 AUGUST 1984
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

Geoff Barton sank his teeth into Sammy Hagar's eighth solo record, 'VOA', suggesting that its title stood for 'Very Ordinary Album'. Barton dared to suggest that The Red Rocker hadn't created anything of note since leaving Montrose almost a decade earlier. "This LP has induced in me such a sense of lethargy that... hell... I can't be bothered," he summed up.

KIRK DOUGLAS "WILLING" TO PRODUCE MANOWAR VIDEO

DATELINE: 23 AUGUST-5 SEPTEMBER 1984
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

Mayhem, *Kerrang!*'s news section, published an item suggesting Manowar had approached screen legend Kirk Douglas to produce a video for their new single 'All Men Play On 10'. Manowar were fans of Douglas's 1958 movie *The Vikings*, and the veteran actor had "expressed willingness to undertake the task." However, if the liaison actually happened then we can find no proof.

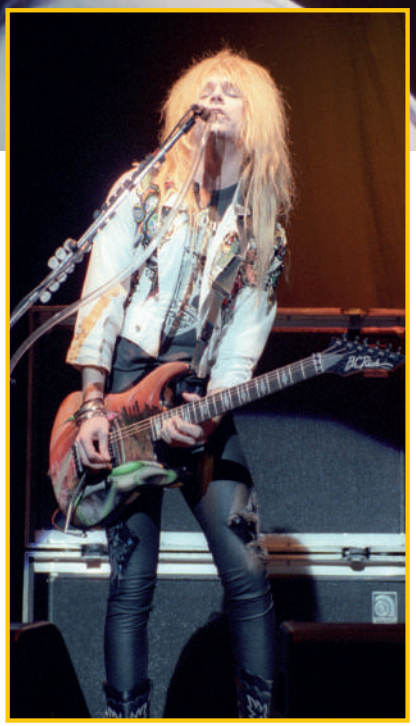
Photos: Getty Images/Pete Cronin/Redferns; IconicPix/Ray Palmer Archive

MY FIRST GIG

DATELINE: 27 MARCH 1973, HERSHEY, PENNSYLVANIA

"ALICE WAS WAY AHEAD OF HIS TIME!"

FORMER **BRITNY FOX** GUITARIST **MICHAEL KELLY SMITH** REMEMBERS THE ALICE COOPER SHOW IN HIS NATIVE PENNSYLVANIA THAT CONVINCED HIM HE WANTED TO BE A ROCK STAR…



"IF I'M TOTALLY HONEST Alice Cooper wasn't the very first gig I ever saw. I'd been to a few smaller concerts, and had actually seen an Aerosmith show in a school gym in Allentown in Pennsylvania when the band was still completely unknown. But that show was so small that you couldn't even count it as a real gig. The Alice concert in Hershey was part of his 'Billion Dollar Babies' tour in '73 and it was a *massive* arena show, so that's what I count as my first *proper* rock experience. There were maybe 30,000 people there! I was 14 years old at the time, and as you'd expect, I'd never seen anything like it before.

"Bizarrely the opening act that night was the pop duo Flo And Eddie, who'd had a couple of hits when they were in the Turtles back in the '60s. They did a couple of Turtles songs that I knew, so that was pretty cool, but you couldn't call exactly their performance a spectacle. The Alice show, on the other hand, was *everything* I thought it would be.

"I WASN'T down on the floor of the Hersheypark Stadium. I was up on the first level of seating off to the right of the stage. But I think that was better, because I had a great view from up there.

"Alice still had his original band at that time. Glen Buxton and Michael Bruce were on guitar, Dennis Dunaway played bass, and Neal Smith was on drums. I thought they all looked great and had a real cool vibe when they played together. The songs they performed that night really didn't disappoint either. I mean, how can you go wrong with classics like 'School's Out', 'Billion Dollar Babies', 'Elected', 'I'm Eighteen', 'Under My Wheels' and 'No More Mr Nice Guy'?

"ALICE WAS never the greatest singer live. Even though I was pretty young that night even I could recognise that he had some issues, moments where he wasn't exactly in tune. But as far as I was concerned it didn't matter. Alice was the ringmaster in charge of this amazing huge spectacle. What difference were a few bum notes going to make?

"He was way ahead of his time in terms of putting on a show. The whole stage set, the endless theatrics like the guillotine and the live snake. It was seriously wild and *seriously* impressive. I particularly remember that there were these gigantic canisters hanging from the roof of the venue. During 'Billion Dollar Babies' the canisters suddenly opened up and it began raining billion dollar bills on the audience below. The bills looked just like real currency, if billion dollar bills actually existed. I managed to grab one as a souvenir and I still have it to this day.

"**THAT ALICE** show was the absolute catalyst for me wanting to be on stage myself. Even at such a young age suddenly I was totally convinced that being a rock musician was what I wanted to do. But not for a minute did I ever think that nearly 20 years later I'd be opening for Alice Cooper on another arena tour with my band Britny Fox. It was an incredibly cool thing to happen to me in my life and I'll always be glad that I got to experience it."

Interview by Dave Reynolds. Photos: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives; Getty Images/Jim Steinfeldt/Michael Ochs Archives

SWEET CRISIS

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE OF the lack of live shows, curtailed at the hands of the COVID crisis. Or maybe it's because a number of international acts have invaded our consciousness via a spate of stellar releases. But our British rock scene has, it must be said, seemed somewhat subdued of late. I'm sure the tables are turning, though, and Sweet Crisis could well be one of the groups to rocket the movement back into overdrive.

FORMED SIX years ago in Cambridge, this five-piece band had been playing live up until the pandemic, trying to establish a reputation and a following to ease themselves into the rock slipstream. The group recently concentrated their efforts on recording a captivating debut album, 'Tricks On My Mind', full of nicely constructed songs, with good use of dynamics and a mood that brings to mind many of the great acts from the '60s and '70s. Not that Sweet Crisis have drowned themselves in nostalgia or even retrofitted their sound to emulate those groups of the past. What they have done, though, is draw on influences and ideas that position them as free thinkers, musicians without boundaries or limits.

That they sound like Family one minute and Led Zeppelin the next is neither here nor there, as many of their songs don't follow a traditional blueprint or roadmap to enlightenment, but rather evoke a memory of some place that we haven't been to for a very long time. Yes, you can position them next to Rival Sons, The Temperance Movement, and The Black Crowes. But for heaven's sake, let's not stretch that comparison to Greta Van Fleet!

THE REASON I really like Sweet Crisis is that their music isn't confined to one genre. If you enjoy classic rock it's odds on you'll dig this. But it's also fair to say there are elements of more 'modern' rock here – bringing to mind acts such as like Ocean Colour Scene, Kula Shaker, and The Black Keys. Sure, the music's heavy in the same way that Free were heavy. But it's also imbued with some soul and pop sensibilities. At the end of the day, though, the overall vibe is absolutely on the rock side of the fence, so don't for one moment imagine Sweet Crisis is a pop rock band pretending to be classic rock.

There's an abundance of edgy riffs and lashings of Hammond organ drawing us into a world of pleasure on the album. The opening track, 'Loosen Up', provides the key to the band's *modus operandi*; weighty hard rock, but with a psychedelic infusion. They also have a great singer, Leo Robarts, who has one of the most identifiable voices the UK has produced in recent years. Leo is one half of the writing team alongside guitarist Piers Mortimer, a man who likes to play in a subdued manner, yet always with an understated touch of class.

THE LP offers an abundance of cracking tracks, including 'One Way Traffic', 'Black Magic' (featuring legendary Deep Purple and Rainbow keyboardist Don Airey), and the Zeppelinish 'This Guitar', complete with its timeless groove. But the band brings another musical benefit, the ability to imbue their songs with highly infectious rhythms that encourage you to think that busting out some dance steps is maybe not beyond your capabilities. Best track? That's 'Misty Haze', a brilliantly constructed blues tune tugging at the soul of Free and the widescreen imperial strut of Zep. Hats off too, to the production of Simon Efemey; clean and crisp and making the songs sound like a million dollars.

IT WOULDN'T surprise me if Sweet Crisis ended this year as one of the most hotly tipped acts of our times. In many respects they have it all; great songs, great sound, and the talent to go as far as their dreams will allow.

Words: Derek Oliver

PERSON OF INTEREST

ROCK CANDY SALUTES THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS WHO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY...

DOOGIE WHITE

DOOGIE WHITE HAS THE kind of CV most rock singers can only dream of, having shared both stages and recording studios with Ritchie Blackmore, Michael Schenker, and Yngwie Malmsteen among numerous others including Tank and Praying Mantis. But for me his greatest achievement will always be driving the *Kerrang!* magazine football team's minibus to an away fixture against the Cambridge Rock Society sometime around 1991.

"Oh, you're not on about that again," laughs White when we Zoom each other for this story. "I have done one or two other things since then, you know!"

THAT'S TRUE of course, but it does tend to stick in your mind when the fella driving the team you play in and asking for directions then goes on to become a *bona-fide* rock star! Now that's what I call being a good hustler...

"Well actually, no," says Doogie. "I don't think that's true at all. To be honest I've always pretty much kept myself to myself. I never was one for pushing myself forward."

So how come you went from wannabe singer like a thousand others in London at the start of the '90s to landing one of the most coveted gigs in rock when you joined Rainbow in 1994?

"Well it was through a mutual friend of ours, actually," says Doogie. "I'd moved down to London from my home town of Motherwell in Scotland. I'd been in a band called La Paz, but ended up in another group called Midnight Blue for a wee while. Then that fizzled out and I was without a band and without any money. You and I both knew Dave Shack, who used to be a rock journalist. But he'd gone to work at RCA Records, where Ritchie Blackmore had a deal.

"I asked Dave if he could by any chance get me a ticket for a gig Ritchie was playing. He not only got me a ticket, but he also got me a pass for the aftershow party, on the strict condition that I didn't get pissed and embarrass him!"

IT WAS at that party that White met Rainbow's tour manager Colin Hart and handed him a demo tape he'd brought along.

"I said, 'Look, if Ritchie ever needs a singer...' and never thought any more about it."

In the meantime Doogie auditioned for Iron Maiden and was beaten to the job by Blaze Bayley, but was then recruited to front German metal band Pink Cream 69.

"I was just about to have a very difficult conversation with my girlfriend about moving to Heidelberg when the phone rang at my house – and it was Ritchie Blackmore's secretary."

After a little to-ing and fro-ing Doogie ended up speaking with The Man In Black himself.

"Ritchie asked if I had any new material, because the stuff on that tape was three, maybe four years old. He also asked for a photo."

The following day Doogie got together with Alex Dickson, the guitarist in Midnight Blue, and wrote a song with the tongue-in-cheek title of 'Come Taste The Band' in the style of Mk IV Deep Purple, the only version of that band Ritchie *hadn't* been a part of.

"Luckily he thought it was funny, and liked the track. Within 10 days I was in America with Rainbow." Doogie was 34 years old.

"I'd moved to London when I was 28, which was late, and had given myself two years to do something. But once I got there the work just started coming in. One week I was flying off to Japan with Praying Mantis, then I'd be doing something else. It just snowballed. Clearly people thought I was good at what I did."

THEY DID, to the extent that Doogie also became a go-to singing voice in the world of advertising.

"I was the voice of Action Man [G.I. Joe] for two years. I did a version of Kiss's 'I Was Made For Loving You' for Costa Coffee. But I'm not a networker. Like joining Yngwie and Michael later in my career, it just sort of happened."

He admits that had Blackmore been happy for him to stay in Rainbow "then I'd still be there. It was my kind of music. But then Yngwie came along and we got on like a house on fire. I stayed for about seven years until he decided that he too wanted a change."

Then Michael Schenker's management got in touch to ask Doogie to audition. "It was just Michael and his Flying V and his Marshalls. We did 15 songs of just guitar and vocals. And give or take the odd break I was with Michael for nine years."

DOOGIE IS a charming man whose lack of ego is refreshing.

"Well I know it's not my name that's selling the tickets. Plus I'm a fan too, so when I'm with these guys I think, 'What would I want to hear *as a fan*.' I can walk around a venue before a show and unless it's Japan nobody recognises me at all. After a show I can go to the nearest bar and nurse a glass of wine quite happily without anybody knowing me. And that's fine by me. I can't imagine what it must be like to be Ozzy or Gene Simmons."

Doogie's latest gig is with Alcatrazz, which is ironic considering the band's former lead singer Graham Bonnet has worked alongside Doogie with Michael Schenker Fest.

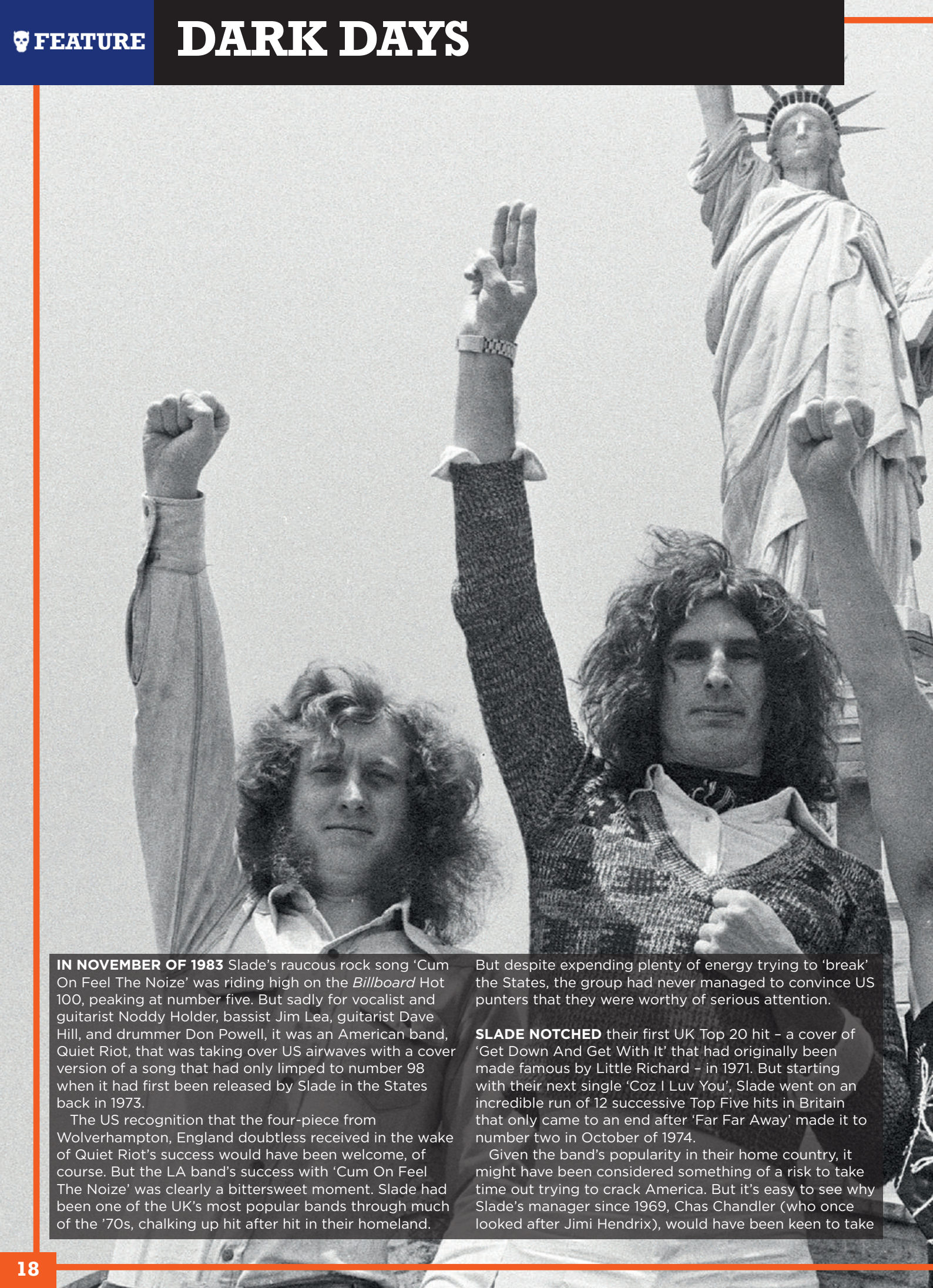
"Graham told me he just doesn't like widdly guitar music any more," explains Doogie. "His music's The Isley Brothers, Buddy Holly, and The Beach Boys; harmony stuff. So he left the band and the Alcatrazz boys phoned to ask me if I'd do a tour to support the 'Born Innocent' album that they'd just done. I said I'd do it if we also recorded an album together, so that's been done now and COVID notwithstanding we'll be out playing to support it."

GIVEN DOOGIE'S past history, though, it's no surprise that this isn't the only musical project he has on the go. He's just re-released 'As Yet Untitled', an album of original material that was first issued in 2011. This 10th anniversary reissue includes a bonus CD of covers Doogie has sung over the years.

"Some of those songs, like 'Twistin' The Night Away', I don't even remember doing," he laughs. "I've also done two other albums in the last six months that I've written with different people who asked me to work with them. But nobody's buying records any more and there haven't been shows, of course. And this music doesn't get played on radio any more, so I get by on my publishing money. But I'm not a big spender. I wear my shoes into the ground and fine dining doesn't work for me. So I'm very happy. I've had a wonderful career and I have a wonderful life. It's been magical and I wouldn't change a damn thing."

Words: Howard Johnson. Photo: Alicia Orta

DARK DAYS



IN NOVEMBER OF 1983 Slade's raucous rock song 'Cum On Feel The Noize' was riding high on the *Billboard* Hot 100, peaking at number five. But sadly for vocalist and guitarist Noddy Holder, bassist Jim Lea, guitarist Dave Hill, and drummer Don Powell, it was an American band, Quiet Riot, that was taking over US airwaves with a cover version of a song that had only limped to number 98 when it had first been released by Slade in the States back in 1973.

The US recognition that the four-piece from Wolverhampton, England doubtless received in the wake of Quiet Riot's success would have been welcome, of course. But the LA band's success with 'Cum On Feel The Noize' was clearly a bittersweet moment. Slade had been one of the UK's most popular bands through much of the '70s, chalking up hit after hit in their homeland. But despite expending plenty of energy trying to 'break' the States, the group had never managed to convince US punters that they were worthy of serious attention.

SLADE NOTCHED their first UK Top 20 hit – a cover of 'Get Down And Get With It' that had originally been made famous by Little Richard – in 1971. But starting with their next single 'Coz I Luv You', Slade went on an incredible run of 12 successive Top Five hits in Britain that only came to an end after 'Far Far Away' made it to number two in October of 1974.

Given the band's popularity in their home country, it might have been considered something of a risk to take time out trying to crack America. But it's easy to see why Slade's manager since 1969, Chas Chandler (who once looked after Jimi Hendrix), would have been keen to take

FOOLS' GAME

In the early '70s **Slade** ruled the roost in their native Britain, racking up endless hit singles and albums. But in 1975 they moved to the States, determined to replicate their success in the biggest market of them all. Yet despite trying really, really hard it just didn't happen. *Malcolm Dome* talks to bassist **Jim Lea** and guitarist **Dave Hill** to find out why...

Photo: Getty Images/Kent Gavin/Mirrorpix

on the States. The financial rewards of breaking the US were far greater than those the UK could offer. And given that Slade were so phenomenally popular in Britain, why *wouldn't* the States lap them up in similar fashion?

"Plus we believed that Chas knew all about how to break America," guitarist Dave Hill tells me. "After all, he'd done it himself as a musician when he was in The Animals in the '60s."

Slade first dipped a toe in US waters in September of 1972, opening shows for Humble Pie before headlining a few small gigs of their own. By April of the following year – and having toured continually in the UK and Europe between times – the band were back again for shows with the likes of Black Oak Arkansas, Johnny Winter and Brownsville Station. In September of '73 Slade were already on their third US trip, playing gigs with bands of differing compatibility including Blue Öyster Cult, Elf, King Crimson, and the Strawbs. Yet another tour, in January of 1974, saw Slade paired with The James Gang and Iggy Pop. Clearly the band was prepared to put the time into breaking the States.

"It's true that we went over a few times even during the peak of our popularity at home," remembers Hill. "But it was only for brief periods. And America's such a vast country that you have to spend a lot of time there to have any chance of making it."

THAT WASN'T the only thing holding Slade back in the US, though, as bassist Jim Lea recalls.

"Whenever you walked into an American venue at that time there would be the unmistakable whiff of pot," says Lea. "We were a band that liked getting the

DARK DAYS

Slade in 1975, the year they tried to crack America. L-R: Dave Hill (guitar), Don Powell (drums), Noddy Holder (vocals and guitar), Jim Lea (bass)

crowd going, so for us that was the kiss of death. You'd be inhaling the fumes and it would slow you down. We were all about beer drinking, so that wasn't what we needed at all."

"We'd come onstage to be faced with audiences that were sitting down," says Hill. "Noddy would try to get them up on their feet, but it didn't work." The drugs in the audience didn't help, but Holder's speaking voice was also a problem in the US.

"The Americans were having a lot of trouble with our accents," confirms Hill. "We'd walk onstage and Noddy would immediately set about getting the crowd out of their seats. But they'd all look at him as if he were talking gibberish. However hard he tried to get through to them it made no difference. They were all confused by his accent and they stayed sitting down!"

According to Jim Lea, trying to find a compatible audience wasn't easy either.

"At that time we just didn't fit into what was going on over there," he says. "The Allman Brothers were huge and Led Zeppelin were doing big business. But what those bands did was very different to Slade. We were all about getting the fans up off their backsides and into the music. These days every band does it, but back then that approach was pioneering."

Hill and Lea realise that their sound and attitude weren't a perfect fit for the US. Yet they can't help but also wonder whether, despite being instrumental in their UK success, Chas Chandler was entirely the right man to help Slade break the States.

"We played in San Francisco one time," remembers Lea. "The show was promoted by Bill Graham, who had a giant reputation for breaking rock bands in the US. He watched our set and was so impressed that he was keen to get involved in our management. Bill phoned Chas up and proposed a deal, but Chas wasn't at all interested. I know that Bill called Chas several times to see if he could find a way to make him change his mind. But Chas was a very big, stubborn man and he wouldn't be persuaded. I do wonder what might've happened if Bill Graham had been involved."

ON 18 April 1975 Slade started a 14-date UK tour at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens, finishing up at the Empire Theatre in Liverpool on 5 May. But then every show the band played during the rest of 1975 was in the US and Canada. Knowing that it would take a concerted effort to make America sit up and take notice, the band took the big decision to leave their commercial heartland of Europe behind and relocate to the US.

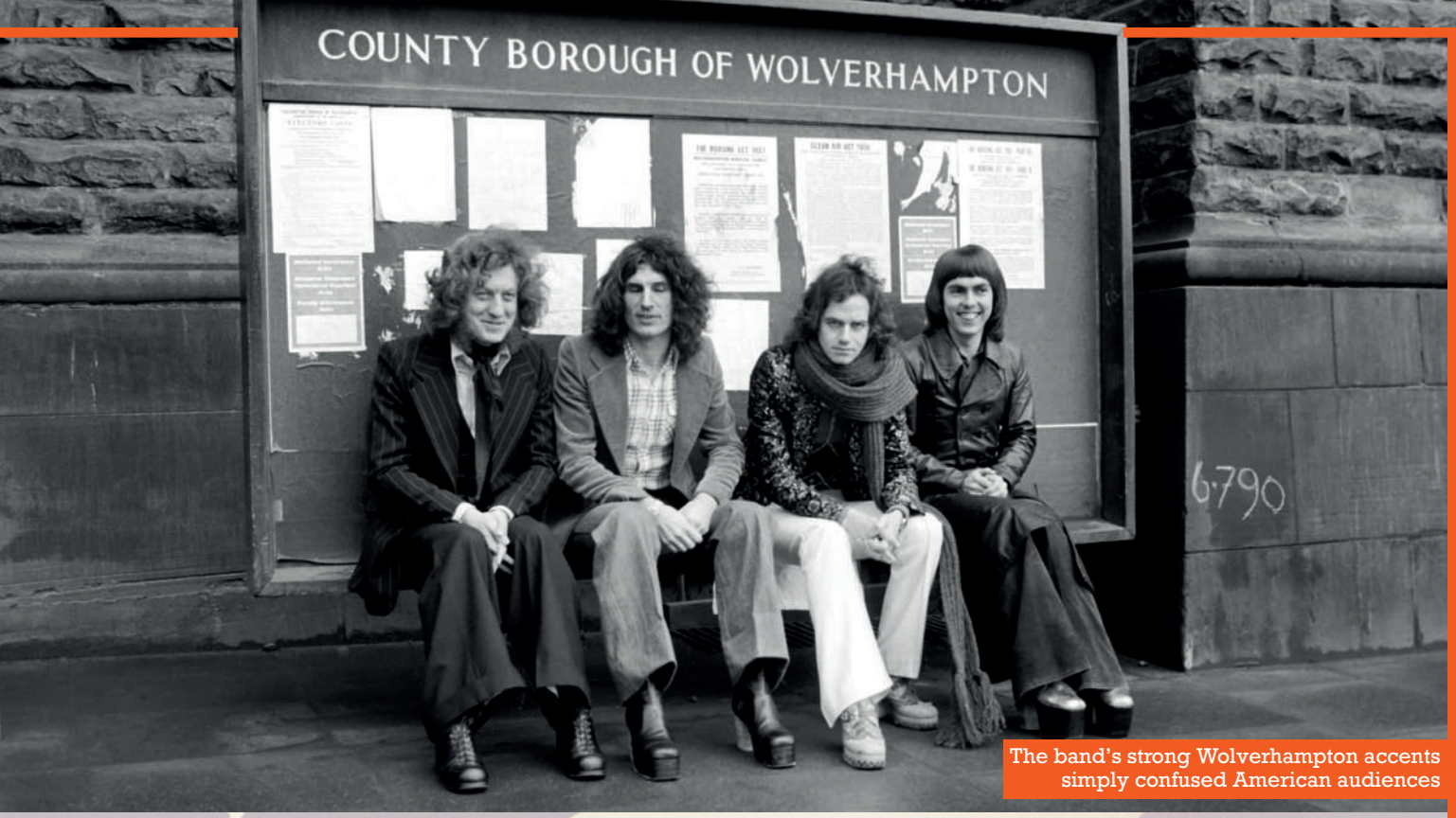
"We didn't like LA at all," says Dave Hill. "It was all too superficial. The four of us were working class English kids who had nothing in common with the place. But New York was a different story. We felt a lot more comfortable there. It was an intense city and a whole lot more rock'n'roll, and that really suited us."

Slade started working the only way they knew how, by going out on the road and hitting people straight between the eyes. But they soon came to realise that this approach to breaking through in America didn't guarantee success.

"It wasn't like breaking England, where if you get a song played a lot on [BBC] Radio One then you stand a decent chance of having a hit single," explains Lea. "In America you can get a load of airplay in one state and be totally ignored in the one next door. You have to keep plugging away.

"We were doing well in places like St. Louis, where we were able to sell out a 10,000 capacity venue," adds Hill. "But then we'd go to other cities nearby and nobody wanted to know about us. It was disheartening."

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Putland; Getty Images/Mirrorpix



The band's strong Wolverhampton accents simply confused American audiences

America was proving a hard nut to crack. Plenty of the bands Slade were playing with became converts to their cause, but it was a different story with the public at large.

"We supported ZZ Top before anyone in the UK knew who they were – even before they got those beards," laughs Hill. "Billy Gibbons told me that he liked my guitar playing, which was nice of him. We did shows with Aerosmith too, and Steven Tyler is a big fan of Slade. I've met him several times over the years and he's always said how much he loved what we did."

Slade were so huge in the UK – and their fan base was so dedicated there – that it was hard to go back to fighting each and every night to win people over.

"We did a gig with the J. Geils Band," Hill remembers. "Our label, Polydor, back in the UK had run a competition for two fans to come out to the States to see us play. So these two fans were flown out, put up in a nice hotel, and brought to the gig. One of them was dressed up like me and the other one like Noddy. That was normal back home, but nobody dressed like us in the States. When we came onstage that night the two of them were standing right at the front of the stage. It was easy for us to spot them, because everyone else was sitting down!

"As we started playing these two English fans were going crazy. The rest of the crowd didn't like it, though, and kept shouting at them to sit down because they were blocking the view! It was pretty obvious that most American rock fans didn't get what we were doing at all."

Behind-the-scenes frustrations about the slow progress were also starting to set in.

"There was a battle going on between Chas Chandler and our US booking agent Frank Barsalona, who was a really big noise in the States," remembers Hill. "Chas insisted that we should be headlining everywhere, because he wanted us to be seen as a major band that didn't open for anyone. Frank's attitude was that we weren't big enough in America to pull that off, and what we should have been doing was opening for big bands in huge venues, building up our following that way. I don't think it helped that Chas and Frank had such different visions of how to break America."

> "WHENEVER YOU WALKED INTO AN AMERICAN VENUE AT THAT TIME THERE WOULD BE THE UNMISTAKABLE WHIFF OF POT. WE WERE A BAND THAT LIKED GETTING THE CROWD GOING, SO FOR US THAT WAS THE KISS OF DEATH. YOU'D BE INHALING THE FUMES AND IT WOULD SLOW YOU DOWN."
> **JIM LEA**

IN AMIDST the frenetic touring in 1975 Slade also decided to start work on the band's next album, the follow-up to 'Slade In Flame', the soundtrack album released in November of 1974 to accompany the film of the same name. The four band members had starred in this surprisingly gritty drama about the pitfalls of the music industry. For the first time they'd had been portrayed in a different light, far removed from the cartoonish good-time glam figures everybody saw them as.

"But when the movie was shown in the States people couldn't understand our accents and the dialogue in it totally passed them by," says Hill. "I suppose we should have thought about using subtitles!"

The musicians were clearly maturing, and the record they started concocting in New York confirmed as much.

"We were keen to develop our style and take the music in a different direction," Hill acknowledges.

To this end Slade started adding splashes of soul, country, and even funk to songs that were recorded at the famous Record Plant Studios in New York.

"We had Chas producing us as usual," explains Lea. "But we also worked with a guy called Denis Ferranti, who was an excellent studio engineer. Did we try to tailor the album toward the American market? Of course we did. What would have been the point of

DARK DAYS

being based in the States and making an album in New York if we weren't trying to create something that would appeal to the US market?"

But if appealing to the US market was the primary goal of this next Slade album, the band inadvertently managed to shoot themselves in the foot when it came to deciding on an album title.

"I had the music for a song called 'Nobody's Fool' worked out, and Noddy added the lyrics," explains Lea. "Chas Chandler liked it so much that he suggested we should call the album 'Nobody's Fools'. We all liked the idea, but then we decided that we should have a photo taken for the cover with all of us wearing red noses like clowns, sort of ironic. The idea totally fit with our British sense of humour. The trouble was, when the album was released the Americans didn't get the joke at all. They couldn't work out why we had these big red noses on. So that didn't help the album's chances over there."

There were rumours, too, about one of the songs on the album titled 'Let's Call It Quits'. The writing credit, like all of the 11 numbers on the LP, went to Noddy Holder and Jim Lea. But the story goes that famous American musician and producer Allen Toussaint launched a lawsuit against the band, claiming that the song was too similar to a number of his titled 'Play Something Sweet (Brickyard Blues)', which had been covered by both Frankie Miller and Three Dog Night in 1974. It's generally accepted that the case was settled out of court, and that Toussaint received 50 per cent of the royalties for 'Let's Call It Quits'.

"As far as I know there was no lawsuit," says Jim Lea. "I can't recall anyone taking any legal action against us. We certainly didn't give Allen Toussaint any money, so I don't know where that rumour comes from."

'NOBODY'S FOOLS' was released on 5 March 1976 and was a commercial failure. It didn't chart at all in the States, the primary target market, and only made it to number 14 in the UK album charts. The band's previous album, 'Slade In Flame', had reached number 93 in the US and number six in the UK. Regardless of the quality of the music on 'Nobody's Fools' it was obvious that the band's Stateside relocation hadn't paid off, and Slade were now performing worse commercially on *both* sides of the Atlantic.

"I still think that 'Nobody's Fools' is a good album," says an unrepentant Dave Hill. "Like The Beatles before us we were moving on from what we were originally known for."

The album's poor performance in the US led to a complete rethink, and the band decided to return to the UK. Their dreams of conquering America like their Midlands compatriots Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath lay in tatters.

"Looking back I think it's clear we were never going to have success in the States," shrugs Lea. "What we were doing was at odds with what America wanted and there was nothing we could do about it. There were pockets of the country where we did well and the single 'Nobody's Fool' did get airplay in some areas. But it was nowhere near enough to break through. To be honest I wasn't disappointed by the decision to go home. I was suffering very badly from homesickness. I was tired all the time and close to cracking from the strain of it all."

"We were out of step with America's musical tastes," says Hill. "It was alright for bands like Zeppelin and Sabbath because they were perceived to be all about albums. We were a hit singles band and on the rock scene that was seen as irrelevant. We reached a crossroads after 'Nobody's Fools'. We knew we didn't belong in America, so there was nothing else for it but to go back to where we were appreciated and give up on the States."

The problem was, though, that the Britain Slade came back to at the tail end of 1976 was very different to the one they'd left behind not even two years earlier. Punk rock had come along and Slade's good-time party rock'n'roll that had dominated the charts between 1971 and 1974 suddenly felt curiously out of step.

"I call that period our duff years," says Lea. "We were completely out of touch with what was trendy. While we'd been doing our best to conquer the States, our own country had moved away from what had made our name."

CHAS CHANDLER opted against renewing the band's contract with their label, Polydor, and Slade's first single after their return to the UK, 'Gypsy Roadhog', appeared on Chandler's own Barn Records label on 21 January 1977. The song's lyrics talked about an American cocaine dealer and complaints from the UK public after a performance of the single on children's TV show *Blue Peter* resulted in it being dropped from the influential Radio One playlist. According to Holder the song "sank without a trace."

The band's seventh studio album, the ironically titled 'Whatever Happened To Slade', was released on Barn Records on 21 March 1977 and also sank without a trace. It failed to chart in the UK providing proof, if any were needed, that the band's stock had fallen dramatically.

Photos: Getty Images/Kent Gavin/Mirrorpix; Getty Images/NBC/Fotos International

Slade soldiered on, releasing another album, 'Return To Base', in October of 1979. Again it did nothing commercially, and the band was on the verge of splitting up when a stroke of luck gave them an unexpected shot in the arm. On 24 August 1980 Slade appeared at the famous Reading Festival.

"We were a last minute addition to the bill," remembers Lea. "Ozzy Osbourne had pulled out and we were offered the slot. Our name wasn't even on the posters. The four of us walked onto the stage, and everyone stared at us as if we were ghosts. Nobody expected anything to go our way..."

And yet the crowd really responded to Slade's high-energy rock'n'roll performance. Their set proved to be the highlight of the entire three-day festival. The UK's emerging heavy metal audience took the band to its collective heart and so Slade began their own musical Indian summer. In 1981 they released the 'We'll Bring The House Down' single, which delivered a UK Top 10 position for the first time since 1975, followed by an album of the same name that made Top 30.

Slade performing on US TV show *The Midnight Special* in 1975

"WE WERE OUT OF STEP WITH AMERICA'S MUSICAL TASTES. IT WAS ALL RIGHT FOR BANDS LIKE ZEPPELIN AND SABBATH BECAUSE THEY WERE PERCEIVED TO BE ALL ABOUT ALBUMS. WE WERE A HIT SINGLES BAND AND ON THE ROCK SCENE THAT WAS SEEN AS IRRELEVANT."
DAVE HILL

BY 1983 the band had signed to RCA and a single, 'My Oh My', almost made the coveted UK Christmas number one slot. With Quiet Riot's version of 'Cum On Feel The Noize' having been a Top Five US hit the previous month it was a truly remarkable turnaround for a band that three years earlier had been on the verge of quitting.

"I think Quiet Riot did that cover because their producer Spencer Proffer thought [vocalist] Kevin DuBrow sounded a lot like Noddy. It was a compliment to us that they did it and it woke up America to our songs, which we'd never truly been able to do ourselves."

The band's 1983 UK album, 'The Amazing Kamikaze Syndrome' (containing 'My Oh My'), was repackaged for the States with a different title, 'Keep Your Hands Off My Power Supply'. Lo and behold, it coughed up two US hits. First single 'Run Runaway' rose to number 20 and 'My Oh My' reached number 37.

With Ozzy Osbourne's wife and manager Sharon Osbourne now also looking after Slade's affairs the band finally went back to America.

"We opened for Ozzy in '84," says Jim Lea. "It wasn't a particularly good fit, but it did put us back in front of big audiences." Once more, though, Slade's American jinx hit.

"Right at the start of the tour I contracted hepatitis and we had to withdraw from the rest of the dates," says Lea. "It was a major blow. Our US label CBS was really behind the band, and they wanted us back on the road as soon as possible. I got calls from the top people at the company pleading with me to get the band back over. They said, 'Ratt and Quiet Riot are stealing your audience.'"

THE PROBLEM was that besides Lea's illness, Noddy Holder's marriage was breaking up and the band stopped touring for some time to support their singer through a difficult time. The band never did return to the US. Yet as is often the way, it was only after the original Slade line-up splintered when Noddy Holder left the group definitively in 1992 that US musicians started to acknowledge the band's enormous influence on them.

"Kiss came to see us a lot and took loads of ideas from Slade," says Jim Lea. "The Runaways were fans too, and I know that Dr. John and Frank Zappa also loved what we did. I even found out not so long ago that Bruce Springsteen was a massive fan. If you listen to 'Born In The USA' you can hear a lot of Noddy in the way Bruce shouts out the song's title."

"I think Dee Snider from Twisted Sister best summed up why we never really made it big in the States," says Dave Hill. "He told me that there was a big musical divide in the US when he was growing up. 'You were either in the Woodstock camp, or you were in the Slade camp,' he said. 'And I was in the Slade camp'. But back then the Woodstock generation was in the majority and there weren't enough kids who were into what we did.

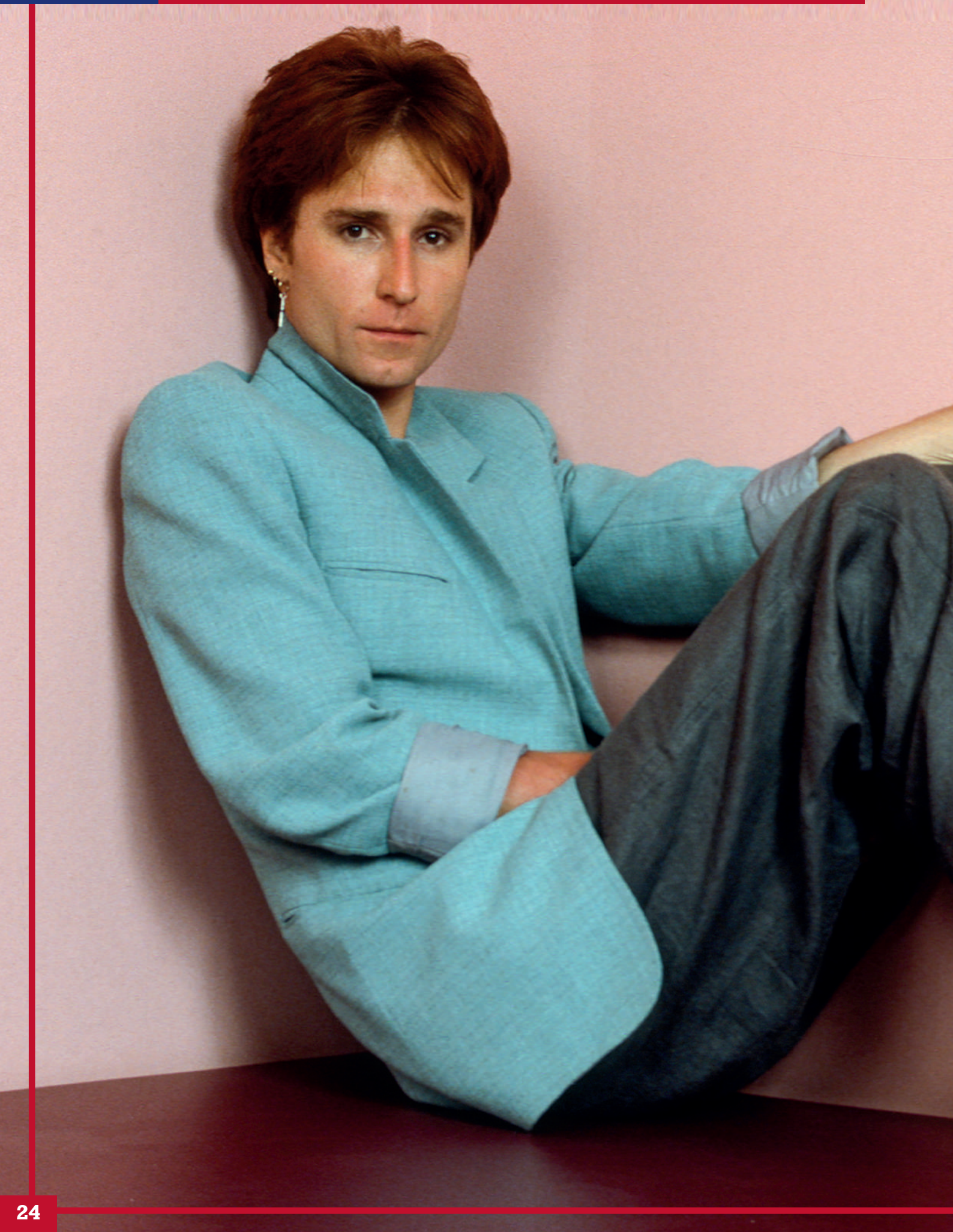
"When we were huge in Britain people really believed that all we needed to do was turn up in America and play and the place would fall at our feet. That was the plan back in 1975, but in the end the sheer size of the country got the better of us.

"We sat with Status Quo somewhere in the States and they'd given up on ever becoming big in the States; they were going home. Chas Chandler refused to accept that it couldn't be done, so we stayed on a while longer before finally coming to our senses.

"I remember touring in Australia with Elton John," continues Hill. "He once asked me, 'How did Slade *not* make it in America? I just don't understand it'.

"Do I regret that we moved to New York to give it a proper go? No way. There were a lot of fun times. But the odds were always stacked against us. Our timing was wrong. At the end of the day America wanted Lynyrd Skynyrd, and they didn't want Slade."

EYEWITNESS DATELINE: 1984



THE MAKING OF JOHN WAITE'S 'NO BRAKES'

The former **Babys** frontman found himself in a tight spot in 1983, tied to a record company he believed wasn't interested in him and unsure whether he even wanted to carry on in the business. Yet somehow the singer got back on his feet again and delivered a number one hit single, 'Missing You'. **John Waite** reveals the story behind his remarkable comeback to *Howard Johnson.*

Photo: Getty Images/Lester Cohen

ENGLISH VOCALIST AND BASSIST John Waite was at something of a career crossroads in 1983. After nearly a decade of hard graft fronting British rock band The Babys and launching a solo career, the 30-year-old was sick to death of making music for a record company, Chrysalis, that in his estimation was "anti-artist" and had left him in the position where "I couldn't afford a new pair of shoes." This, despite having notched up two Top 20 US hits with The Babys, 1977's 'Isn't It Time' and 1979's 'Every Time I Think Of You'.

Waite moved back from his adopted homeland of the United States with his wife, and settled in a sleepy northern English town called Sedbergh. He was seriously considering quitting the music business altogether, beaten down by the endless machinations of the industry.

Yet Waite eventually went back to the States, re-settled in New York, signed a new deal, and attacked his work with a fresh sense of purpose, or what could perhaps be better described as almost religious zeal.

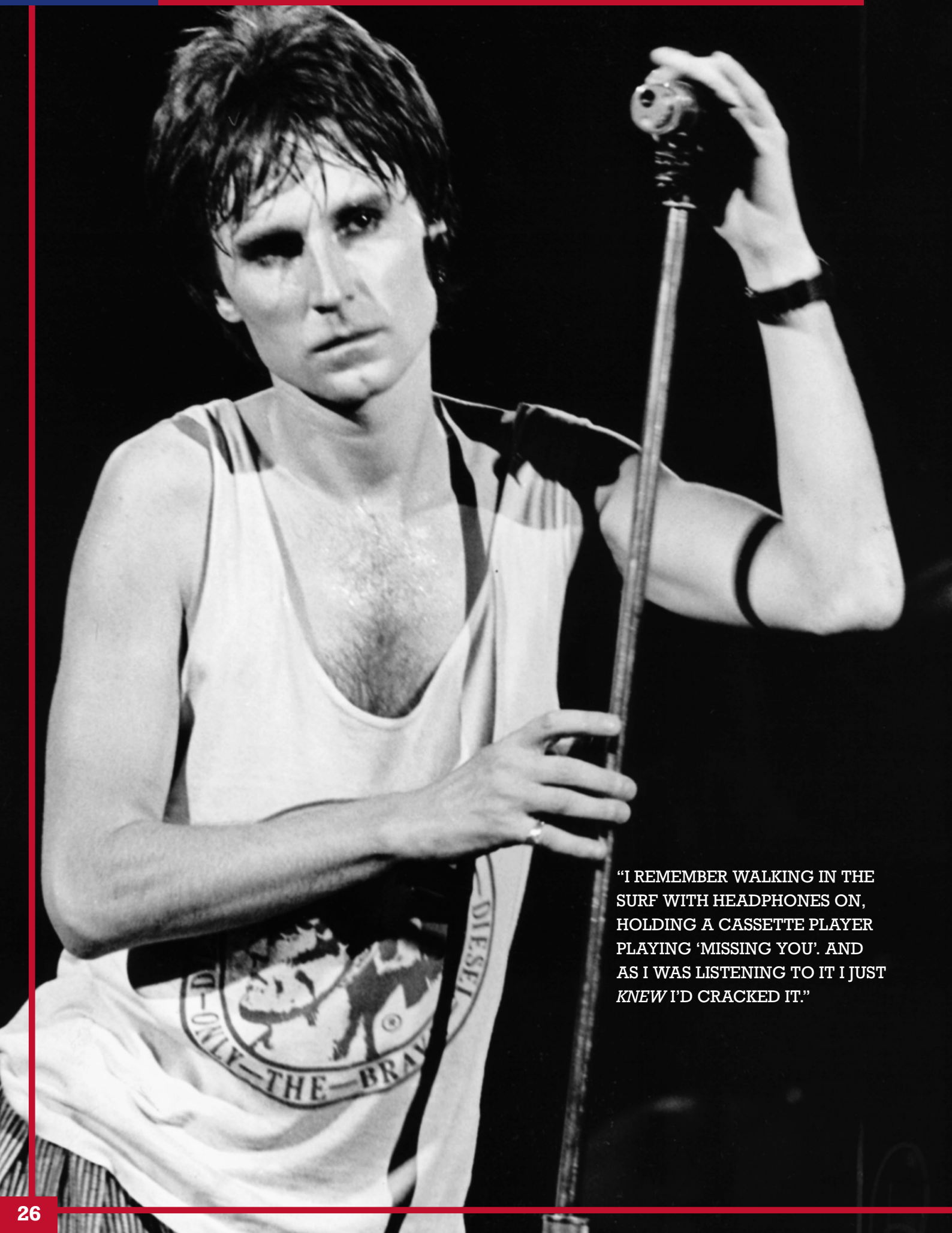
His next album release, 'No Brakes', was his first for EMI America, and contained the song 'Missing You', which not only made it all the way to number one on the *Billboard* US singles charts, but also became a *bona fide* classic that ended up transcending both fashion and time. The song sounds as fresh and vital today as it did the first time we all heard it some 37 years ago. So how did this remarkable change in fortunes happen?

JOHN, SET THE SCENE FOR US PLEASE. EXACTLY WHAT WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AND CAREER AT THE END OF 1982?

"I was at a point where the one thing I knew was that I couldn't deal with Chrysalis any more. I'd recorded and released my first solo album, 'Ignition' [in June of 1982], and they'd done virtually nothing with it, even though I was getting eight spins a day on MTV [for the minor hit 'Change']. I couldn't walk down the street in New York without being recognised, but I couldn't afford a new pair of shoes. It was absurd! So one day I said 'f*ck it', got on a plane, and went back to England. I bought a cottage with my wife and settled into living in a country village where there were lots of great walks and three really good pubs. But it was hardly rock'n'roll. I had an acoustic guitar with me, nominally to start writing songs for my second solo album. But I wasn't at all sure that I was going to return to the music business.

"After around about six months in England I got a call from a couple of lawyers I'd met before I split from the States, who said they believed they could get me out my record contract with Chrysalis, and would I consider coming back to America. I said yes, because after six months of being in the countryside – lovely as it was – I was really hankering for New York City. I missed it. I missed the life that I'd had, and I missed being creative."

EYEWITNESS DATELINE: 1984



"I REMEMBER WALKING IN THE SURF WITH HEADPHONES ON, HOLDING A CASSETTE PLAYER PLAYING 'MISSING YOU'. AND AS I WAS LISTENING TO IT I JUST *KNEW* I'D CRACKED IT."

AND WERE THE LAWYERS AS GOOD AS THEIR WORD? DID THEY SUCCEED IN GETTING YOU OUT OF YOUR CHRYSALIS DEAL?

"I had to give Chrysalis a lot of stuff, but those guys did eventually do what they said they could do. I got off the label. But not only that, they then went to EMI America and said, 'We've got John Waite. Do you want him?' And the people at the label lit up! From the moment I met the EMI folk, it just clicked. They had this A&R guy called Gary Gersh. He was young and he was hip and he was into what I was doing. I couldn't understand it, actually, because Chrysalis was so anti-artist and all of a sudden there was this new label with a totally different vibe. After years of being told I was no good by some f*cking idiot behind a desk at a record company I was finally being embraced as an artist. I'd had to deal with that negativity for years, so it was just fantastic. EMI offered me a great deal and I signed the contract without hesitation."

SO WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST STEPS TOWARD MAKING MUSIC FOR YOUR NEW LABEL?

"Gary Gersh and I had a few dinners where we talked a lot about music. He told me about this guitar player he knew, Gary Myrick, who was on the LA scene. He thought he was an interesting player and that Gary and I might make for a great mix. So Gersh asked me if maybe I fancied going to LA to have a jam with Myrick just to see. I said 'Why not?' I was chomping at the bit, to be honest."

AND HOW DID THAT GO?

"I met Gary Myrick at SIR rehearsal studios in LA. He was a Texan guy with a brush cut, a black overcoat down to his feet, and cowboy boots. Immediately we liked each other. He painted and I painted. He knew a lot about art and I knew a lot about art. And then there was his guitar playing, which was really unorthodox. He played like he was from outer space. I thought it sounded like Texas blues on acid. We got Stan Lynch from Tom Petty's band playing drums with us at first, but after a couple of weeks we brought in a drummer called Curly Smith, because Gary had worked with him in his band The Figures. We even had Flea from the Chili Peppers come down and sit in on bass, because he was a big Babys fan. But eventually I sent for Donnie Nossov, who'd played bass on 'Ignition', and Gary and I started writing songs left, right, and centre... things like 'For Your Love' and 'Saturday Night'. And the more we worked together the more obvious it became that we were right on the tip of what was going on, if not a mile in front of it. It wasn't straight-up rock. It was more *avant-garde* and I loved that. All I knew was that I didn't want to come back and make a typical f*cking idiotic, mainstream piece of sh*t. I just couldn't do it."

WHAT KIND OF ARTIST DO YOU RECKON EMI AMERICA THOUGHT THEY'D SIGNED?

"I think they believed I was a singer, a writer, and a talent. Gary Gersh has since said that *I* knew I was the real deal, and that he knew it too. But we had to make a record to prove it. I already had a song ready called 'Dreamtime' that I'd written with ['Ignition' guitarist] Ivan Kral and that hadn't made it onto the first solo album. I had another one called 'Restless Heart' that went right back to the days of The Babys. Those guys thought it was just funny that I'd written a country song, so I took it off the table at the time.

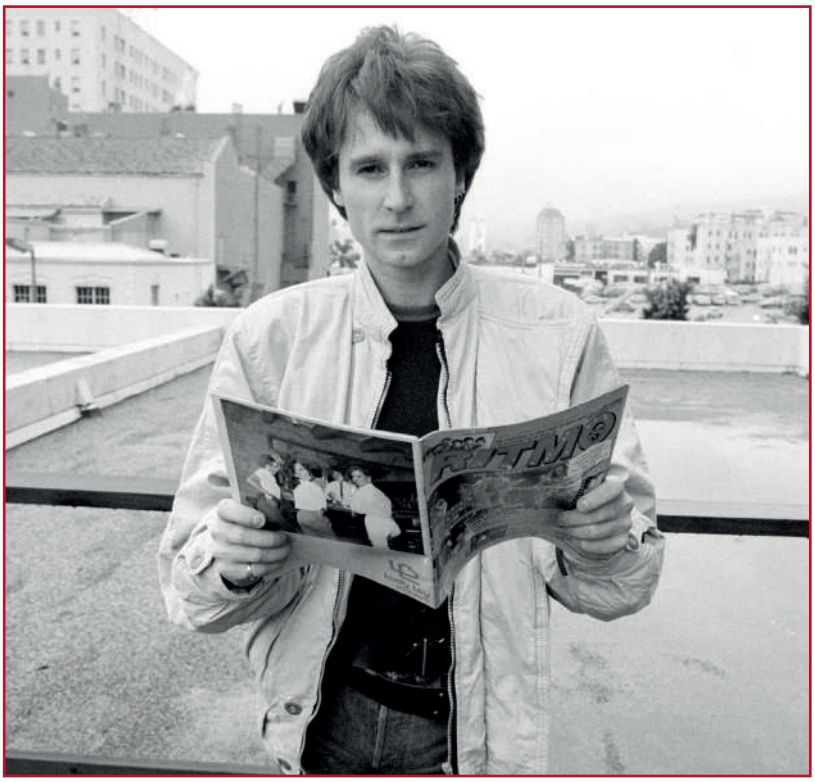
"It was pretty apparent that we needed to catch the moment, get going, and get on with the record. So Gary Gersh came in with a couple of other songs and said 'See what you can do with these.' There

Photos: Getty Images/Chris Walter/WireImage; Mark 'Weissguy' Weiss

was a number by [Plasmatics bassist] Jean Beauvoir called 'Dark Side Of The Sun' and a [Kiss guitarist] Vinnie Vincent song called 'Tears'. I rewrote the lyrics and put some more hooks in there and they were great songs. But even so, I didn't feel particularly good about recording two outside numbers. I didn't think they were as *real* as we were, but you do what you have to do to get an album done."

IS THE RUMOUR TRUE THAT YOU'D STARTED WORK ON A SECOND ALBUM FOR CHRYSALIS BEFORE ALL OF THIS HAD EVEN HAPPENED?

"That is true. I'd gone to a place called The House Of Music in New Jersey and started a record there. I had songs including 'Twilight Zone', 'Here We Go Again', 'Living In America', and 'Stay', and I was calling the shots. We had a great band, we were recording onto analogue tape, and it was really spectacular. But Chrysalis heard it and said it wasn't any good, which broke my heart. And when you get to that place, and somebody who doesn't know anything about music is telling you that you're wrong, one of two things is going to happen. It's either going to get physical, or you just get up and leave. So I got up and left."



"WE WERE RIGHT ON THE TIP OF WHAT WAS GOING ON, IF NOT A MILE IN FRONT OF IT. IT WASN'T STRAIGHT-UP ROCK. IT WAS MORE AVANT-GARDE AND I LOVED THAT."

WHY DIDN'T YOU USE ALL OF THOSE SONGS FOR YOUR FIRST EMI PROJECT?

"Because I'd moved on. Every band is a composition of different people, and each band has its own character. You always have to make sure that the songs fit the character of the band. It's something I can do. I can look at things and pull an album together like it's a movie or a painting.

"The band at that point was great, kind of a hardcore three piece of drums, bass, and guitar. There were no keyboards then. So it was raging, and there were only certain songs that would fit. Ironically 'Restless Heart' *did* fit even though it was a country song, because Gary was from Texas, so he had that blues and country thing in him. The first song is always the hardest to latch onto, because you're looking for a direction and a coming together of all the energies in such a way that it has one coherent form. Then if you can write a second song that can fit alongside the first one, but doesn't *sound* like the first one, then you've got a *direction*."

SO HOW WAS THE ALBUM DONE EVENTUALLY?

"It was all done on the run, really. I wasn't stopping to look in the mirror. I was like a bullet. I was on 10. I'd been given some validation and I was playing with very serious musicians. The title 'No Brakes' summed up the mood at the time. I was coming to this moment where I just knew that I wasn't going to be put off by anything. It was like, 'Give me the f*cking mike. You play this and it's going to be great. I'm going to count you in and let's go.' We didn't even do demos of the songs."

AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR CAREER YOU PRODUCED YOUR RECORD YOURSELF, IS THAT RIGHT?

"I told Gary Gersh that I wasn't going to be *produced*, because it had never really worked for me before. I'd never made a record that I thought sounded great. And he was totally OK with that. He said, 'We work with this really great guy called David Thoener, who can engineer and mix, and you can work with him and I'll keep an eye on you.' So Gary wrote the cheque and suddenly we were in the biggest recording studios in LA and New York, The Record Plant, and EMI were covering the bills. We started recording, roared it up and made it really spiky. And as we were recording I'd step back and look at what we needed to refine. I'd watch this thing come together in a way that was no different to creating a big canvas with a paintbrush, because an album is like a huge painting. It doesn't really matter what kind of music you play as long as the songs are sharp. You can't go into a studio and say, 'Listen, we want it to be like *this*.' So I let the players loose – and Gary Myrick didn't need any encouragement. He really was unorthodox, so that suited him down to the ground. And the most orthodox moment actually turned out to be 'Restless Heart', because it was a country song. But most of the album was an experiment, an experiment that worked.

"We did the drums, bass, and guitars in LA, and Gary Gersh would fly in from New York to listen to stuff. We worked really quickly and it was some of the best writing I've ever done. Most of the time Gary would listen and he'd say, 'Yeah, that works,' because he really, really believed in the project. That was a totally new experience for me.

"So then we went to New York to do vocals and

keyboards. Gary Myrick flew in to add some extra guitars and that was it. Gary Gersh and I shared the same energy. He said 'I really understand what you're doing,' and nobody had said that me in all the time I'd been making albums."

HOW LONG DID IT ALL TAKE?

"I'd say no more than six weeks in total, though I seem to remember that the process was spread out. We started the recording in LA, then moved to New York, and finally came back to LA for mixing. And it was during the mixing process that I wrote 'Missing You'."

SO 'MISSING YOU' WASN'T ORIGINALLY A CORNERSTONE SONG OF THE ALBUM...

"Not at all. The album was done, but something was bugging me, and it was the fact that I knew we didn't have a really great *single*. I knew it and I was restless. I'd wake up in the middle of the night and go, 'What's the missing piece? There's something knocking on the door in the back of my head that can't get in.'"

SO WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT IT?

"David Thoener was mixing the album and I was using my time wisely, writing some stuff with this guy called Chas Sandford. I'd already covered a song of his called 'Temptation' on the 'Ignition' album. So I went around to his place one night and he had this reel-to-reel machine, but he hadn't put any marker numbers on it. So he was running the tape over the heads from left to right, trying to find this song we were working on, which to be fair wasn't great. I was just being polite showing up, really. But somewhere on that tape he had this eight-note groove. That's all it was, just an eight-note groove. But it really jumped out at me. I said 'What's that?' And Chas said, 'Ah, it's nothing. It's just something I'm messing about with.' I said, 'No, no, no. That's got my name all over it.' So he put me in his spare room with a mike and some headphones and I sang something over the top of the groove. And I said, 'How was that?' He said, 'Yeah, not bad.' So I asked him to play it back, but he told me he hadn't recorded it."

> "I ALWAYS WENT WITH THE IDEA THAT WHEN YOU'RE AT THE CARD TABLE YOU DON'T HEDGE YOUR BETS, EITHER ARTISTICALLY OR FINANCIALLY, BECAUSE IT JUST DOESN'T F*CKING MATTER! YOUR JOB AS AN ARTIST IS TO CAPTURE LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE AND IF YOU HAVE TO SIGN OFF A MILLION DOLLARS TO DO IT, THEN WHERE'S THE PEN?"

NIGHTMARE!

"It was ridiculous! So I said, 'I'll do it again, but this time *record* it.' So Chas hit the record button and I went again. I was just scatting the vocal, feeling my way into the melody. I was thinking of two songs – 'Wichita Lineman' by Glen Campbell, and 'Catch A Train' by Free. I started with the line 'Every time I think of you,' which of course was the title of a Babys song, just to get me going. And I got the whole first verse and the whole chorus in one go. It was like, 'Whoa!' It was like getting an ►

Photos: Getty Images/Richard E. Aaron/Redferns; Getty Images/Walt Disney Television

electric shock. It was insane, and I knew, I *knew* this song was going to be number one, that we were going to sell a million records really quickly, and that I was in business. It was the thing I'd been waiting for.

"I had this vision in my head of telegraph poles, trains coming in and departing, and the desert. A horrible distance between lovers, strangeness, something impersonal; isolation and denial. The Small Faces had this song called 'I'm Only Dreaming'. Steve Marriott is one of my all-time favourite singers. And in that song there's a line that goes, 'I can lie to myself' – and I hadn't planned to sing it on 'Missing You'. But all of a sudden it came into my head. And that was when I understood it all, the irony of the song, singing '*I'm not missing you at all*' when the truth behind the line is the complete opposite. With that one line the song turned inside out."

"I WASN'T STOPPING TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR. I WAS LIKE A BULLET. I WAS ON 10. I'D BEEN GIVEN SOME VALIDATION AND I WAS PLAYING WITH VERY SERIOUS MUSICIANS. THE TITLE 'NO BRAKES' SUMMED UP THE MOOD AT THE TIME."

SO WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

"Well the album was pretty much finished, but I took this really rough recording that Chas and I had made to EMI and said, 'You're not going to believe this, but I need to cut another song.' They'd been so good with the cash up to that point, but they said, 'John. We just don't have the money.' I said, 'But this is a *hit*!' And when I played them the cassette everybody just went quiet. It was so obviously a number one song. It was legit. So I got the money."

AND AS IF YOU HADN'T SPENT ENOUGH, YOU ENDED UP USING RENOWNED PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID BAILEY TO SHOOT THE IMAGE FOR THE ALBUM COVER...

"I was in New York staying at the Mayflower Hotel, and I was spending a Sunday afternoon walking around Central Park with Gary Gersh and my manager Steve Machat. We ended up stumbling across an exhibition of photographs by David Bailey, all this great stuff of the Kray twins, Michael Caine, The Beatles, Mick Jagger, Jean Shrimpton. Swinging London, you know? It was all beautiful. And I turned to Gary and said, '*This* is what we need for the album cover.' It was so artistic, not the kind of thing you normally saw on a record sleeve. And within a week I was on Concorde flying to London for the photo session."

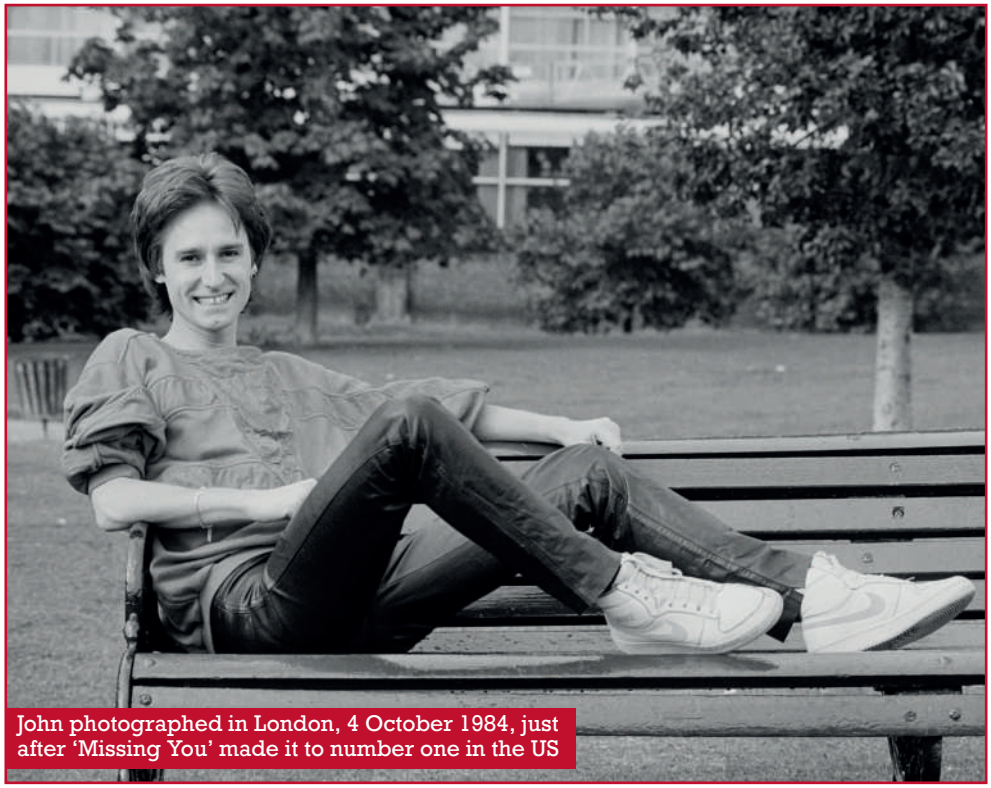
AND HOW DID THAT GO?

"Well I got to the studio at something like eight in the morning, a little hungover, and Bailey's assistant was there cooking breakfast. Then David walked in – and he's shorter than you think! He had an anorak on. He was dressed as if he'd just stuck his hand in the closet and pulled out whatever he first laid his hands on. And he hadn't shaved! So we had bacon and eggs together and I took an aspirin. He had one of those old school plate cameras and he just said, 'Do something. *Be* something! Give it to me!' It was hysterical and great at one and the same time. I had this long parachute coat and he had something very similar. So I used both of them together and came up with the amazing shot that made the cover. I think we only got two images out of the session, but that was all we needed."

AND HOW MUCH DID THOSE TWO SHOTS END UP COSTING YOU?

"I don't remember, but I do recall someone telling me

that there would be a $35,000 cancellation fee if I didn't show up, so that gives you some idea! Whatever it was, it was a huge amount!"


John photographed in London, 4 October 1984, just after 'Missing You' made it to number one in the US

WERE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT HOW MUCH WAS BEING SPENT ON THE PROJECT AND HOW MUCH DEBT YOU WERE GETTING INTO WITH YOUR NEW LABEL?
"No, because the idea at the time was that the music business didn't work like a normal business. Two per cent of the artists made all the money, and if you were part of the other 98 per cent trying to get to the top of the tree then you weren't making anything. So I always went with the idea that when you're at the card table you don't hedge your bets, either artistically or financially, because it just doesn't f*cking matter! Your job as an artist is to capture lightning in a bottle and if you have to sign off a million dollars to do it, then where's the pen? Because if it comes right, then *everything* comes right. And if it doesn't come right, then they're going to get rid of you."

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10, HOW CONFIDENT WERE YOU THAT 'NO BRAKES' WAS GOING TO BE A REALLY BIG SUCCESS?
"Ten! After the album was finished my wife and I flew to Jamaica for a break. Ronnie Wood was on the same plane as us and Keith Richards met him at the airport, drinking rum and obviously *holding*, which seemed par for the course at the time! I remember walking in the surf with headphones on, holding a cassette player playing 'Missing You'. And as I was listening to it I just *knew* I'd cracked it. And then I dropped my cassette player in the water and it never worked again! So there's always a downside, but I knew and the record company knew. It was like you couldn't hold back 'Missing You', because it was that big. So when the album came out it was five-star reviews and headlining shows. Wow! And then 'Missing You' went to number one – and the validation level was ridiculous."

IN YOUR MIND WAS THE SUCCESS A BIT OF A 'F*CK YOU' TO CHRYSALIS?
"Oh definitely. I'd spent a lot of time with that company being told that I was no good. Then all of a sudden I was being embraced as an artist. It was like being shot out of a canon, like it was Christmas Day every day, and that really was a wonderful experience. I felt like a true artist at last."

FINALLY JOHN, HAVE YOU LISTENED TO 'NO BRAKES' RECENTLY? AND IF SO, HOW DO YOU THINK IT STANDS UP ALL THESE YEARS LATER?
"I did listen to it on a plane a couple of months ago, and I still think it's a great-sounding record. It's a lean, mean, blues record that was ahead of its time and I think it always will be, because it doesn't sound like anybody else. All the players were so gifted and we were catching lightning in a bottle. After all the chaos of my career up to that point all of a sudden everything came together. All of a sudden everything made sense. So I just took the ball and I ran with it.

JOHN WAITE – 'NO BRAKES'

Recorded: 1983-1984
Released: June 1984

LINE UP:
JOHN WAITE – lead and backing vocals
GARY MYRICK – guitars
CURLY SMITH – drum kit
DONNIE NOSSOV – electric bass guitar
BRUCE BRODY – keyboards
STEVE SCALES – percussion

Produced by John Waite, David Thoener, Gary Gersh
Engineered and mixed by David Thoener
Recorded at: The Record Plant, New York City and Los Angeles

TRACK LISTING
Saturday Night (John Waite, Gary Myrick)
Missing You (John Waite, Chas Sandford, Mark Leonard)
Dark Side Of The Sun (Jean Beauvoir)
Restless Heart (John Waite)
Tears (Vincent Cusano, Adam Mitchell)
Euroshima (John Waite, Gary Myrick)
Dreamtime/Shake It Up (John Waite, Ivan Kral)
For Your Love (John Waite, Gary Myrick, Donnie Nossov, Curly Smith)
Love Collision (John Waite, Donnie Nossov, Curly Smith, Gary Myrick)

Photos: Mark 'Weissguy' Weiss; Getty Images/Larry Ellis/Daily Express/Hulton Archive

OVERLOOKED

The classic Legs Diamond line-up photographed in 1979. L-R: Michael 'Diamond' Gargano (bass), Mike Prince (keyboards and guitar), Rick Sanford (lead vocals and flute), Jeff Poole (drums), Roger Romeo (guitar)

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Legs Diamond is the ultimate connoisseur's choice, a hard rock band that featured an incredible singer and knockout songs. *Dave Reynolds* goes in-depth with keyboardist **Michael Prince** and drummer **Jeff Poole** to unpick the full story of a cruelly underrated act...

WHENEVER ANYTHING IS EVER written about Legs Diamond the epithet "The world's greatest undiscovered hard rock band" is never too far away. Indeed, as *Rock Candy Mag* publisher Derek Oliver states on the cover of sister label Rock Candy Records' expanded reissue of Legs's eponymous debut album, "If ever there was a band that should have taken their music to the very top of the charts and beyond, then Legs Diamond was surely it."

Yet while the reasons for the American band's failure to achieve huge success can be attributed to a certain degree of naivety, they were also victims of circumstances that were beyond their control. There was rarely, if ever, anything wrong with the quality of their music.

Often described, perhaps lazily, as America's answer to Deep Purple, Legs developed a sound that *was* based on a keyboard-embellished hard rock approach that was similar to Purple. But in my view it was more melodic, hugely inventive, and totally unique.

Having recorded three commercially unsuccessful albums between 1977 and 1979, it appeared that Legs Diamond would be a short-lived project. Surprisingly, though, the band was handed a second opportunity to shine in the mid '80s, which was unfortunately hamstrung by a lack of financial backing. Legs would then return sporadically over the years, and talk of a 'final' album is ongoing even now.

The definitive Legs Diamond line-up is generally acknowledged to be the one that recorded those first three albums; 1977's 'Legs Diamond', 'A Diamond Is A Hard Rock' from the same year, and 1979's 'Fire Power'. Vocalist Rick Sanford, guitarist Roger Romeo, bassist Michael 'Diamond' Gargano, keyboardist/guitarist Michael Prince, and drummer Jeff Poole formed a five-man gang, with shared belief in the power of their music and trust in each other. However, the likes of guitarists Donovan McKitty and Jim May, drummer Dusty Watson, and bassist Mike Christie have also played their part in creating Legs's place in hard rock history.

LEGS DIAMOND first formed in 1972 in the Bay Area up in Northern California. "I'd turned a friend's shed into a rehearsal room," recalls co-founder Jeff Poole. "Mike Gargano heard me, we started to jam together, and eventually formed the band."

Both musicians were fans of gangster movies in general, and TV show *The Untouchables* in particular. Jack 'Legs' Diamond was a flamboyant Irish American gangster who thrived under prohibition in New York City and Philadelphia during the 1920s and Poole thought his name was cool enough to co-opt for his band.

"I said, 'What about Legs Diamond? A diamond is the hardest rock and we can play all kinds of album titles off of that.' Michael loved the idea straight away."

Poole had made his recording debut at the age of 15 on the 'Revolution In Our Lifetime' single with his first band Rocking Horse. But he soon figured that the fledgling Legs Diamond needed to move south to LA if they were to make serious progress.

"When we were in the Bay Area Michael Gargano and I shared this really beautiful house that overlooked the entire Castro Valley area, about 30 miles from San Francisco," says Poole. "We had plenty of room to rehearse, and would play a gig once a month in this hall we'd rent to put on shows. That, together with odd gigs in Oakland and Berkeley, earned us enough money to live on. It was great, but we weren't going to get a record deal living in the Bay Area. And while the band was pretty good, we just couldn't find a proper singer. The guy we had at the time [a fella called KG Austin, who came onstage wearing a cape and a top hat] was a great showman, but that wasn't enough. Around 1973 I got an offer from some friends of mine to join them in their band Zolar X down in Los Angeles." Zolar X was an androgynous looking, sci-fi obsessed glam band way ahead of its time...

"Although I went down to LA my intention was never to join that band," Poole reckons. "I really didn't want to be a spaceman, but I did want to check out the Hollywood scene. When I came back north I told Michael that we *had* to move there. We used to play shows with Yesterday & Today [later to become Y&T] at that time. We were good friends, and Michael and I asked their guitarist and singer Dave Meniketti to come over for a jam. Dave loved Legs Diamond and he was pretty ►

Photo courtesy of Legs Diamond

OVERLOOKED

keen to join us until I mentioned that we were going to move to LA. Dave couldn't leave his family and friends at that point, but for a moment there he almost became our frontman and lead guitarist."

POOLE HAD convinced his bandmates Michael Gargano and guitarist Jeff LaMonte to make the move, and so the trio left the Bay Area after a Halloween show in October of 1973 where Yesterday & Today opened. Singer KG Austin also made the move, hoping to retain his place in the band. But it didn't work out that way.

"The four of us moved from this beautiful, spacious home to a one-bedroom apartment in the seediest part of Hollywood. But we never felt bad about it. It was all about paying our dues. We got jobs; Michael and I began working at Turner's Liquor Store on Larrabee [Turner's is actually immortalized on the rear cover of Sweet's 'Desolation Boulevard' album] and we did quite a few shows with that original band. We were never *great* though, so there came a time when Michael and I felt we needed to make a change. We didn't have the right singer and we were a two-guitar band. But because Deep Purple were always favourites of ours we started looking for a keyboard player. That's when we found Michael Prince."

> "EDDIE VAN HALEN ONCE TOLD ME IF WE EVER NEEDED AN OPENING BAND, THEN THEY WOULD WILLINGLY BE THERE. BUT WE NEVER PLAYED WITH VAN HALEN BECAUSE WE WERE *BOTH* SELLING OUT CLUBS. YOU CAN ONLY FIT SO MANY PEOPLE INTO A CLUB."
> **JEFF POOLE**

New York-born Prince was the son of songwriter Hughie Prince, who co-wrote 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy', a huge wartime hit for The Andrews Sisters that was also nominated for an Academy Award. Bette Midler had a Top 10 hit with her version of the song in 1973, just a year before Michael Prince had wound up in LA in August of 1974.

"I went to high school in Atlanta, Georgia and that's when I started playing in a band," Prince recalls. "We were too young to play clubs, so we did schools and colleges playing Top 40 stuff. I'd already started writing songs, though, and we'd stick a few of those in the set. I then moved to Dallas, Texas to attend college and actually gave up music for a while to concentrate on my studies. But almost inevitably I ended up joining another band. The funny thing is, I only came to LA for a summer break and fully intended to go back to Texas. But then I signed up to a Musicians Contact Service, got called by Michael Gargano, and he invited me down to a rehearsal. The only problem was that I didn't have any transportation for my equipment. I managed to make it there to play, though, and while I wasn't crazy about the singer I loved the band and had high hopes for the whole thing. I must admit I was a bit wet behind the ears. I thought that if you wrote some really good songs you automatically got a record deal. But we did have a really strong belief that we would get signed!"

"Until we made the change to adding keyboards we really didn't have an identity," says Poole. "Once we'd made that change we began looking for a better frontman. We were pretty aggressive musically and had a clear idea of where we wanted to go. We needed a guy like Ian Gillan or Robert Plant; singers who were playing arenas."

Jeff Poole

BY THIS time the band had changed vocalist, bringing in Greg McGhee. And while Poole had been playing with guitarist Jeff LaMonte since 6th grade, he had now left the band and had been replaced by Richard 'Smokey' Taylor. Soon after Michael Prince signed on, a decision was taken to replace McGhee. Rick Sanford had been performing under the terrible pseudonym 'Rick Rock', and by a quirk of fate happened to be putting an ad up on a rehearsal room noticeboard at the very same time that Legs Diamond were posting their 'singer wanted' notice.

"When Rick came in that first time we played a Led Zeppelin song together – and he blew us away!" marvels Poole. "He was the guy we were looking for."

"Rick is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet," comments Michael Prince. "He'll literally give you the shirt off his back. Working with Rick was harmonious from day one."

When Richard Taylor left toward the end of 1974 his replacement was Jamaican-born guitarist Donovan McKitty. "I think we met him at the Rainbow Bar & Grill," notes Jeff. "This was when we became friends with Deep Purple and Ritchie Blackmore. Ritchie loved Donovan and used to loan him guitars. Funnily enough, when Ritchie first came to see us rehearse he actually wanted to buy Donovan's guitar, but it was the only instrument Donovan owned! He didn't have a spare."

With a more dynamic line-up Legs began to be courted by interested management companies and record labels. The band also gained a number of high profile gigs opening for the likes of Ted Nugent and Montrose.

Guitarist Roger Romeo before he went punk rock

"Playing with the right bands in front of the right audiences started the buzz for us that led to us signing a management contract with the Toby Organization [who also handled Angel], and ultimately our record deal with Mercury," Jeff explains.

As much as they were enthused by the music, it was Toby who suggested the band needed a stronger look. Naturally, the group's name lent itself to the gangster image they adopted.

"We went downtown, bought cheap three-piece pinstripe suits, hats, and a starter pistol for Rick that looked like a real gun. He would take it out and fire it at the start of the show," says Michael. "You could never do that now, but Rick continued to use the gun right into the '80s."

The band had also toyed with the idea of each band member adopting 'Diamond' as a surname. With Michael Prince and Michael Gargano both in the group, though, having two Michael Diamonds would've been way too confusing! The idea was quickly abandoned by everyone in the band except Gargano.

Having settled into the LA club scene Legs Diamond rubbed shoulders with another band that seemed to be on the rise, Van Halen.

"I thought Legs Diamond and Van Halen were the two best bands in town in 1976 and 1977," says Michael.

"I didn't feel there was any competition," adds Jeff. "Not because we were so good, but because we were doing the best *we* could. I never looked at music as a competition. Eddie Van Halen once told me if we ever needed an opening band, then they would willingly be there. But we never played with Van Halen because we were *both* selling out clubs. You can only fit so many people into a club. It made no sense to put us together when a promoter could make the same money with either one of us."

Rick Sanford

LEGS FIRST made it to vinyl when a demo version of their classic song 'Rat Race' was featured on the 'LA Soundtrack '76' album, released by local radio station K-WEST.

"When Michael Diamond [Gargano] and I worked at Turner's Liquor Store we became friends with the DJs at the station, because the store was just across the street from K-WEST. They'd come and see the band when we played. When they came up with the idea for the 'LA Soundtrack' album they knew that we had a perfect song for it in 'Rat Race' and asked us to put it on the LP. It was the most played track on the album."

The band's momentum kept on building. Mercury Records sent their rock guy Cliff Burnstein (later to form the Q-Prime management company with Peter Mensch and oversee the careers of Def Leppard, Metallica, and Tesla among others) to see Legs play in LA. Burnstein loved the band and they signed for Mercury on 9 November 1976. But just before signing, and just as Legs were about to begin preparations for the recording of their debut

Photos: Courtesy of Legs Diamon; Rich Galbraith

OVERLOOKED

album, Donovan McKitty fell ill...

"Donovan had a neuromuscular disease called myasthenia gravis and it affects your nerve endings," explains Michael. "It started with one of his eyelids and then began to affect his ability to play guitar. It got to the point where Donovan literally couldn't stand, let alone play guitar."

"When Donovan became sick we had the terrible situation of trying to replace him," adds Jeff. "It was fortunate that Roger Romeo had just arrived in Los Angeles and was looking for a band. Much credit has to go to Donovan for his incredible character. Even though he knew we were about to get signed and that he could no longer be a part of the band he was a really class act. He took the time to show Roger all of the songs we were playing at that time. We obviously didn't want to part company, but Donovan realised he just couldn't play anymore."

"I think it was Michael Diamond who found Roger Romeo," continues Poole. "Roger was from Detroit and he had a covers band that he'd moved to LA with. He fit in with us really well, both playing and personality-wise. But he joined us after we'd got our record deal and already had all the material written. That's why Roger didn't write any songs on the debut album."

AT FIRST the band members were excited at the prospect of working with English producer Derek Lawrence, who'd recorded with Deep Purple, Wishbone Ash, and Angel among others. But the actual experience left Legs Diamond a little deflated, despite many fans of the band citing the debut album as one of the greatest hard rock records of all time.

"We obviously liked Deep Purple, but looking back that album could've been so much better sounding," sighs Prince. "There were a lot of things we'd been waiting years to try, but Derek said he'd done all that on his last production. He just wanted to get the thing done. I didn't feel we were his main priority."

> "GENE SIMMONS ASKED ME IF KISS COULD RECORD OUR SONG 'SATIN PEACOCK'. I TURNED HIM DOWN BECAUSE IT WAS GOING ON OUR FIRST ALBUM. IT WOULD'VE BEEN PERFECT FOR KISS. IT WAS A BLUNDER ON MY PART."
> **MICHAEL PRINCE**

Michael Prince

"I do remember that we played eight songs for him and he just stood up after the eighth one and said, 'That's it'," says Jeff. "We had like 30 numbers to play. I'm really pleased with the songs that made it to the first album, but what you hear on that record is pretty much how we played them live."

"Derek didn't really bring anything to the table," says Michael. "Working with Eddie Leonetti, who produced our second album 'A Diamond Is A Hard Rock', was a completely different experience. He came to our rehearsals, he had great ideas. We learnt so much from working with him and the engineer Lee DeCarlo. I would've been more than happy to work with the two of them again."

'A Diamond Is A Hard Rock' was a punchier, heavier record than the debut thanks to songs like 'Jailbait' and 'Waiting'. But it also contained the haunting power ballad 'Woman', considered by many – Jeff Poole included – to be the greatest Legs Diamond track.

By this time the band had already been hitting the road in earnest, playing wherever they could and opening for Kiss, Rush, Styx, Golden Earring, and Ted Nugent. They excelled opening for Kiss, something that the headlining act were quick to notice by extending their stage time from 30 to 45 minutes.

"I'd first met Gene Simmons at the Rainbow in LA and he was always very supportive," recalls Jeff. "The first time we opened for Kiss in Lexington, Kentucky in March '77 he came up to me backstage and said 'I always knew you guys would make it'. That was real validation for me."

Gene was such a Legs Diamond fan that he wanted to record one of the band's songs even before they had signed their Mercury deal!

"Gene asked me if Kiss could record 'Satin Peacock'," reveals Michael. "I turned him down because it was going on our first album. It was clearly because of the line: '*Kiss me, but don't mess up my hair.*' That would've been

perfect for Kiss. It was a blunder on my part. We could've still put it on our record too."

THEY MIGHT have been on the road a lot, but touring certainly wasn't about private planes and limousines for Legs Diamond.

"We had a Ford van and a decent equipment truck. Everyone took a turn driving," recalls Jeff. "We tried to keep our expenses to a minimum because we wanted to do as many shows as possible. We knew that was our ticket to the next level."

The band's inability to break through wasn't down to a lack of support from their label, Mercury. Nor the fact that the label was primarily based in Chicago rather than LA. Had the band's management deal been different it's more than likely the label would have re-signed the five-piece to a new contract.

"We did get a lot of tour support from Mercury," says Prince. "We never took a salary, we just got our *per diems* [daily payments for living expenses]. The road crew were making more money than us. And then we found out that our managers were taking 20 per cent of *everything*, which included our tour support. The label realised this and it was legal, because it was in the contract. But I still think about that now and it still really annoys me."

Michael Diamond

"Mercury made us aware of what was happening," continues Poole. "They loved us, but because our management was taking 20 per cent of the tour support money it was going to be hard to break us if that continued. The money wasn't going where it should have. They felt it was an impossible situation for them to break the band. It broke our hearts, but it also opened our eyes."

"It was naivety on our part," admits Michael. "I look back on it now and I think, 'Why did we let that happen?'"

The band had strong pockets of support, particularly in San Antonio, Texas, but in 1970s America, radio play was absolutely crucial in a band's quest to get any wider recognition.

"We met all of the radio promotions guys who worked for Mercury as we travelled around the country," says Michael. "Some of them were really good at their job and were best friends with the programme directors, but others weren't. Whenever we went into a station with this one particular guy the room just got colder. Immediately we knew that we weren't going to get played there.

"We were disappointed not to be picked up for a third album by Mercury. Had we done one more album with them we probably would've become five- to ten-times bigger than we were. We found out later that the reason they let us go was because of the management situation. It bothered them, but if they'd told us to fire our management then the whole thing would've turned into a legal mess. It was easier for them *not* to pick up the option for the third album. I never thought we wouldn't get another record deal. But it took us six months."

"We never got down about the situation," furthers Jeff. "We were tight as a band and had the self-belief that we'd get another deal. The camaraderie that we had was absolutely solid. We were a gang."

THE BAND had already recorded a third album's worth of songs at Pasha Studios, but by the time they had signed with the independent Cream label they had a whole new batch of songs ready to go. Was it frustrating going from a major label to the independent Cream label for the 'Fire Power' album?

"We liked the attention we got at Cream," states Michael. "Al Bennett, who ran the label, was a very wealthy man. He had the money to give us tour support. He even flew us up to Boise, Idaho to play a show – and no one had done that before! What really killed us with Cream was that Al wanted to retire and his son Wayne was starting to run the label. Wayne was tragically murdered a few weeks before our album came out, and Al was a broken man after that."

1979's 'Fire Power' is an album that leaves the band's fans divided. Although it opens with one of the group's greatest ever songs in 'Underworld King', overall 'Fire Power' has a lighter feel than its two predecessors and includes no less than three covers: The Righteous Brothers' 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'', Boxer's 'More Than Meets The Eye', and the Hudson Brothers' 'Help Wanted'. In the past the band have tended to dismiss these songs. Now, though, Jeff makes an interesting observation about their inclusion on the album.

"We'd watched the success that Van Halen had with their covers, so we thought maybe we could play that game too. When the subject of recording covers came up we were open to the idea. We loved our version of 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin''. We liked 'More Than Meets The Eye' too, but 'Help Wanted' was something we were never going to do live until we played in San Angelo, Texas and found out it was the number one song at radio in that area! We had to re-learn how to play it at a sound check, but when we performed it that night it was like The Beatles had suddenly come to town. The crowd went nuts! We'd never played the song live before – and we never played it again either!"

"Cream wanted us to do a second record," says Michael. "Al's son's death had taken a lot of the wind out of his sails, but we did have a two-album deal. We were even introduced to the guy Cream wanted to produce the record. The problem was that he wasn't the guy *we* wanted. He had no ideas. We wanted somebody with proper pedigree. We didn't feel the production on 'Fire Power' was good at all. Walt Marriner Jr. had done that album. I'd met Walt previously and he'd told me he was actually [infamous '60s record producer] Shadow Morton, and I believed him. There was nothing like Google to search back then! In fact he was just someone who lived down the street from me in an apartment that had 15 cats that pissed everywhere! Still, Walt did have a connection with Al Bennett and that's how Legs got signed to Cream.

"The Cream deal could've been the best thing to happen to Legs Diamond," offers Jeff. "Wayne Bennett loved the band, he was really thinking long-term, and we had a feeling we had someone who believed in us, had the power and the backing. But then of course Wayne was killed. It was out of our control."

Photos: Courtesy of Legs Diamond

OVERLOOKED

THE BAND chose to leave Cream without making a second LP for the label, but never stopped writing. The belief was still very much there as they began to demo tunes for a fourth album. But while four of the band members were happy to stick to their tried and trusted melodic hard rock formula, guitarist Roger Romeo suddenly started bringing what were effectively punk rock songs to the table. "It really wasn't our style of music at all," notes Michael.

"The four of us were solid in that respect," adds Jeff. "So Roger decided to walk away and do his own thing. He now recognises that it was a mistake. He could easily have stayed in the band and done his other stuff as a side project."

Jim May stepped into Romero's shoes in early 1980, after Legs persuaded him to leave his LA club band Naked Angel. Michael Prince had seen May playing at the Starwood club in Hollywood.

"At one point we rehearsed with Donovan McKitty, who'd thankfully recovered from his illness," reveals Jeff. "He had a couple of good songs with him that we worked up and we did at least one show with Donovan before we found Jim May. But after leaving the band the first time around Donovan's musical taste had developed in a different direction to ours."

McKitty, who sadly died in 2017, would form a short-lived trio in London with Nicko McBrain [eventually of Iron Maiden] on drums and ex-Dirty Tricks bassist Terry Horbury in 1979. He would go on to achieve a considerable amount in the music business, not only as a guitarist playing with the likes of Robert Palmer and a host of reggae artists including Burning Spear and Steel Pulse, but also as a songwriter and producer.

Rick Sanford was the next Legs Diamond member to bow out. "Rick had gone off to do something with Mike Pinera from Iron Butterfly and he was also doing some voice work on cartoons," explains Poole. "So we got Tim Eaton in."

Timothy Eaton had previously cut an album for ABC Records in 1975 with his band Bandit.

"I was confident that we had a really good shot with Tim on vocals," states Michael. "But we felt the need to retire the Legs Diamond name and try to become a new band."

UNDER THE name of Rag Doll two songs eventually surfaced on a compilation album entitled 'LA's Hottest Unsigned Rock Bands' in 1983.

"Mark Leonard, who had a label called Target Records, was now interested in us," reveals Michael. "But as Legs Diamond, not as Rag Doll. So we needed Rick back in the band."

The position of guitarist in the new Legs Diamond had originally been offered to Michael Angelo Batio, who would eventually go on to be the guitar shredding maestro of Nitro. Jeff had met Batio working on a project with Santana's Chepito Areas. But with Sanford now back on board it seemed to make more sense to bring Jim May back as well.

"Jim had been in Legs before," says Poole. "Everyone loved him, he was a good writer and the perfect fit. But I had to call Michael Batio. Who knows what would've happened had he joined the band? But [1984's] 'Out On Bail' would've definitely been a completely different album."

Michael Diamond didn't come back into the Legs Diamond fold and the bassist's place was ultimately taken by Mike Christie.

"Mike was a really nice guy," notes Michael Prince. "And he was always five minutes early for everything. That was pretty cool!"

"Mark Leonard ran the Target label out of his house, but we didn't know that when we first met him," laughs Michael. "But we were happy little campers to get a deal with him. He knew Mark Smith, the producer, and they suggested we record at the infamous Sound City, which was a fantastic studio. There's nothing like a new album to get people interested in you, and 'Out On Bail' got us out of LA again and back to the mid-West where we were getting radio airplay once more."

'Out On Bail' has always been seen as a controversial record because of the electronic drums that feature on the recordings. "It was Mark Smith's idea," states Jeff, who wasn't particularly happy with the decision. It would prove to be a factor in Jeff leaving Legs Diamond, though he now acknowledges that he could easily

Vocalist Rick Sanford onstage in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1979

"I UNDERSTAND WHY SOME FANS WOULD FEEL IT ISN'T LEGS DIAMOND WITHOUT RICK SANFORD. I'D LIKE TO HEAR RICK SINGING 'WOMAN' JUST LIKE HE DID IN HIS EARLY 20S TOO. BUT THE POINT IS THAT RICK'S NOT IN HIS EARLY 20S ANYMORE AND HE CAN'T DO IT THE WAY HE USED TO."
JEFF POOLE

Roger Romeo

have remained in the group while pursuing his own side projects.

"I was selfish, because I felt my drumming was diminished by just doing 4/4 timing and that I was losing my identity."

With Poole's departure Legs turned to ex-Lita Ford man Dusty Watson to fill the vacancy behind the drum kit. The band continued to retain a certain level of interest among rock fans throughout the '80s and into the '90s, with the critically acclaimed 'Land Of The Gun' album from 1986, and 1990's 'Town Bad Girl'. Those albums were released on independent labels, though, without the financial means to support the band in the same way a major would be expected to. It was all but impossible for Legs Diamond to rise above cult status. In between these two releases Jim May went off to pursue a career engineering TV sports broadcasts. He sadly passed away in July 2020. Roger Romeo returned to Legs Diamond for 'Town Bad Girl'. A live album, 'Captured Live', followed in '92 and the band (with new bassist Adam Kury) finally made it over to the UK that year for some well-received club dates, albeit with Jeff Marcus playing guitar in place of Romeo.

The decade closed with the release in 1999 of 'Uncut Diamond', an album of tracks from '79 that finally saw the light of day. Most of these songs are now included as bonus tracks on the Rock Candy Records re-release of 'Fire Power'.

BOTH ROGER Romeo and Jeff Poole would re-join Legs Diamond for the new millennium. A visit to Europe in 2005 and a subsequent release titled 'Diamonds Are Forever' – their first album of new material since 1993's 'The Wish' – followed. However neither the live dates nor the album featured Rick Sanford as the singer decided to retire from the music business. Sanford was replaced by ex-Shout/Wild Horses vocalist John Levesque, though ex-Montrose vocalist Keith England now occupies the frontman's position.

"We never officially retired," states Poole. "We're known for having long spells between albums, but before the pandemic hit we had shows booked in Texas and we were rehearsing material for the live show and new songs that we wanted to record.

"I understand why some fans would feel it isn't Legs Diamond without Rick Sanford," the drummer adds in closing. "I'd like to hear Rick singing 'Woman' just like he did in his early 20s too. But the point is that Rick's not in his early 20s anymore and he can't do it the way he used to. But we're not unique being a band that had an iconic lead singer and is still moving forward. Look at Queen, look at Journey. You can't fault bands for wanting to do what they want to do. The songwriting is still there for us, the intent is still there and the fire is still burning."

Photos: Rich Galbraith; courtesy of Legs Diamond

TOP LEGS!

JEFF POOLE REVEALS HIS SIX FAVOURITE LEGS DIAMOND TRACKS...

1 'WOMAN' (FROM 'A DIAMOND IS A HARD ROCK')
"This is a power ballad that speaks to the heart. Who hasn't gone through a relationship where things aren't what you were hoping for? The song features an incredible vocal performance by Rick Sanford, and this is still the most requested Legs song, both live and on radio."

2 'ROCK AND ROLL MAN' (FROM 'LEGS DIAMOND')
"This is a song with many layers that again features a superb vocal performance from Rick. It also introduced the flute as a lead instrument! It's a saga of a rocker's life on the road, and considering that it was written before the band had ever toured it's pretty insightful!"

3 'UNDERWORLD KING' (FROM 'FIRE POWER')
"I like the gangster imagery of the song that links it to the Legs Diamond name. This is a crowd pleaser right up to this day and is one of my personal all-time favourites to play."

4 'RAT RACE' (FROM 'K-WEST LA SOUNDTRACK '76' AND SUBSEQUENTLY RE-RECORDED FOR 'LEGS DIAMOND')
"This is a song I love for sentimental reasons, because it was the first number that got Legs Diamond any airplay. When 'Rat Race' was released on the LA radio station compilation album it quickly became the most requested song on the release. It was the catapult of recognition that got us to the next level."

5 'WAITING' (FROM 'A DIAMOND IS A HARD ROCK')
"'Waiting' has a very infectious groove to it. I really like the keyboard intro, the lead guitar work, and Rick's vocals, and I'm also pretty pleased with the backwards drum ending. It's easy to see why it's one of my personal favourites!"

6 'STAGE FRIGHT' (FROM 'LEGS DIAMOND')
"A song that's always been a fan favourite live, 'Stage Fright' has a clever, sing-along message considering there's probably a little stage fright in all of us. But as the song says; 'If you can't pay the price then you can't play the game'."

THE *ROCK CANDY* Q&A

CONNY BLOOM

ELECTRIC BOYS

THE SWEDISH ROCKER ON GETTING CAUGHT UP IN FUNK METAL, PLAYING IN HANOI ROCKS, AND WHAT DEFINES SUCCESS…

YOU AND ELECTRIC BOYS BASSIST ANDY CHRISTELL GO BACK A LONG, LONG WAY, DON'T YOU?
"We met in school in Stockholm when we were both 14! He was the only other person in class who looked like a scruffy rock'n'roller, so I figured he'd probably be like me. Turns out we both loved Alice Cooper. Andy had a bass that he couldn't play, and I had a guitar that I couldn't play very well. It seemed like a good combination."

DIDN'T YOU BOTH END UP IN A BAND WITH ONE-TIME HANOI ROCKS DRUMMER GYP CASINO?
"We did. Andy and I were playing youth clubs in different little bands, not really enjoying school. But our first proper group was a power trio called Roadrats, and Gyp was the drummer. It didn't last long, so toward the end of the '80s it was just me and Andy trying to figure out what music we wanted to make. One day we came up with the riff to 'All Lips And Hips'. We developed it into a song and recorded three numbers on a portastudio, and all of a sudden there was something there that we liked. That's when we decided to put Electric Boys together."

YOUR SOUND WASN'T LIKE THE SUNSET STRIP ROCK THAT WAS SO POPULAR AT THE TIME, WAS IT?
"Not really. We got a bit of interest from Polygram Sweden, so we went for a meeting with them. I told the A&R guy that we wanted sitars and backwards guitars and birdsong and whatnot on our album, so I was convinced we were going to get a no, because it didn't sound like a commercial idea at all. But it turned out the guy loved crazy stuff. He was a Frank Zappa fan – and the madder our ideas were, the more he loved it!"

'ALL LIPS AND HIPS' CAUSED QUITE A STIR ALL OVER THE WORLD, DIDN'T IT?
"I think it was our publishing company that first sent the song out. I remember their office in the States sent a fax back raving over the track, saying it sounded like Aerosmith and that it was a definite hit. That was really encouraging, because we didn't even think we were going to have any success in Sweden. It was all pop music at the time with people singing in Swedish. We always had it in mind to leave as soon as possible. Go to America. Go to the UK. But as it turned out even people in Sweden dug Electric Boys. I think people were fed up with what was going on just like we were. We came at the right time."

YOUR 1989 DEBUT ALBUM WAS 'FUNK-O-METAL CARPET RIDE'. DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA ABOUT THE EMERGING FUNK METAL GENRE?
"We weren't aware of any funk rock thing happening. I may have seen those styles mentioned together in the press, but I wouldn't be surprised if funk metal grew out of the title of our album. It's ironic, because we weren't a funk band *or* a metal band. We just wanted a title that would make people think we were a bit different before they heard the music. We were listening to Hendrix, so we were much more of a classic rock band. But I liked rock bands that grooved. Led Zep, 'Come Taste The Band'-era Deep Purple, that kind of thing. But it wasn't exactly Sly And The Family Stone! The big problem was that most of the bands that emerged under the funk metal umbrella were just so *bad*. And we kinda got caught up in it."

THERE WERE THREE YEARS BETWEEN YOUR DEBUT AND FOLLOW-UP ALBUM, 1992'S 'GROOVUS MAXIMUS'. WHY SO LONG?
"I was the only songwriter and we were touring a lot. I've never been able to write songs on the road, and our own high standards meant we wouldn't record until we felt the material was good enough. People said that grunge happening around that time made it difficult for us, but I never saw Nirvana as a threat. What killed it for us was that we spent a sh*tload of money on our third album, 'Freewheelin'', and when it was finished the record company said they didn't have any money left to promote it! I couldn't believe they hadn't budgeted properly, but that was it for the band. It left a bad taste in the mouth."

YOU MADE A COUPLE OF SOLO RECORDS, BUT THEN JOINED UP WITH GINGER WILDHEART FOR HIS SILVER GINGER 5 PROJECT. HOW WAS THAT EXPERIENCE?
"It gave me the chance to get away from a lot of hassle and just play some rock'n'roll. The Silver Ginger 5 album was already recorded when Ginger asked me to join, and the minute I put on the first song, 'Sonic Shake', it just hit me in the face! I knew I wanted to do it and we had a great time touring in the UK and Japan. I played with Ginger on and off quite a bit."

"LOOKING BACK ON THE '80S IT FEELS LIKE A DECADE THAT WAS FANTASTIC FOR MUSICIANS, BECAUSE YOU COULD MAKE A TON OF MONEY. BUT IT WASN'T FANTASTIC FOR *MUSIC*."

SO WHY DID YOU JOIN HANOI ROCKS IN 2005?
"I go a long way back with those guys because Roadrats opened up for Hanoi Rocks in the early '80s on a big tour in Finland. [Hanoi guitarist] Andy McCoy and I would jam on Status Quo songs, reggae stuff, '70s disco, all sorts. In 2004 Andy was playing in Stockholm and came over to my flat. He noticed we had the same record collection and soon afterwards he phoned me up asking me to join him in Hanoi. I thought it might last 12 months, but it ended up being four-and-a-half years. On a good night we were a really well-oiled rock'n'roll machine."

WHEN HANOI CAME TO AN END IN 2009 WHAT WAS YOUR PLAN?
"Andy Christell was also in Hanoi and when the band broke up the two of us were heading back to Sweden on a ferry discussing what we were going to do next. I told him I felt like doing some of the things we used to do, so we decided to revive Electric Boys. Given the way the music industry had changed by that time it was like going right back to the beginning. The money wasn't there any more and still isn't. But there's nothing else that makes me feel like music does. I get by doing what we're doing, and as long as I can get by doing fun stuff, that's success to me."

DOES THE FACT THAT RECORD SALES ARE MINIMAL THESE DAYS AT LEAST MEAN THAT CREATIVELY-SPEAKING YOUR NEW ALBUM, 'UPS!DE DOWN', IS SIMPLY YOU DOING WHATEVER YOU WANT?
"I think so. Music can be more authentic now. I don't think I could have opened an '80s album with a seven-minute instrumental! Looking back on the '80s it feels like a decade that was fantastic for musicians, because you could make a ton of money. But it wasn't fantastic for *music*. Now I do whatever I like, and I can't wait to be back on the road again. Do a gig that's great, get in the bus, open a beer, drive off into the night knowing you've got another gig tomorrow. That's what it's all about to me."

Interview by Howard Johnson.

SONGWRITING SURVIVOR

Jim Peterik is most famous for co-writing 'Eye Of The Tiger', a song that literally everybody knows. But the man from Illinois has been composing hits almost all his life, both for his own bands The Ides Of March and Survivor, and others including 38 Special and Sammy Hagar. *Jon Hotten* catches up with a true phenomenon to find out exactly what his secret is...

The Survivor line-up that recorded 'Eye Of The Tiger', written by Jim Peterik and Frankie Sullivan. L-R: Frankie Sullivan (guitar), Stephan Ellis (bass), Dave Bickler (vocals), Jim Peterik (guitar and keyboards), Marc Droubay (drums)

A FEW WEEKS AGO Jim Peterik was in a supermarket near to his home in Burr Ridge, an affluent suburb of Chicago, when a young mother stopped and pointed him out to her son.

"See that man with the purple hair," she said. "He wrote 'Eye Of The Tiger'..."

"Happens all the time," Peterik says, happily. "All the time... This little boy couldn't have been more than five years old, and he said to his mom, 'I love that song.' Well let me tell you kid, so do I..."

Peterik laughs, something he does a lot. At 70 years old, and with a career that first coughed up a hit in 1966, he's found life's sweet spot. All of the big things have now been taken care of. And should he ever need cheering up he can always take a look at Spotify, where 'Eye Of The Tiger' – a song issued in the heyday of vinyl, remember – is approaching 686 million plays: "No wonder I like it so much..."

In a world where many artists have love/hate relationships with their best-known songs Peterik is an exception. As we spend an hour talking over his career, the thing that comes across most is the pleasure he's taken from doing exactly what he loves. He's never been a big star. Even with the purple hair he can generally walk the streets of Chicago undisturbed. Yet most of the US and much of the world is familiar with his work. If it's not 'Eye Of The Tiger', then it's his second big hit from actor and businessman Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky* franchise, 1985's 'Burning Heart'. Or maybe Survivor's huge mid-'80s albums 'Vital Signs' and 'When Seconds Count'. Or perhaps 'Vehicle', his 1970 smash with The Ides Of March, once Warner Bros's fastest-selling single of all time and now ubiquitous on film soundtracks and adverts. He talks a lot about luck, but Peterik has had too much of it for it all to be a fluke. As the old adage goes, 'the more I practise, the luckier I get...'

"I believe in good songs," he says. "I'll never pander to things I don't believe in."

Peterik isn't constructed of the usual rock star DNA. He's been married to Karen for 49 years and calls her "my biggest fan and my greatest critic." Burr Ridge is a 20-minute drive from Berwyn, the town where he grew up. He was "music obsessed" as a seven-year-old and that's still the case now.

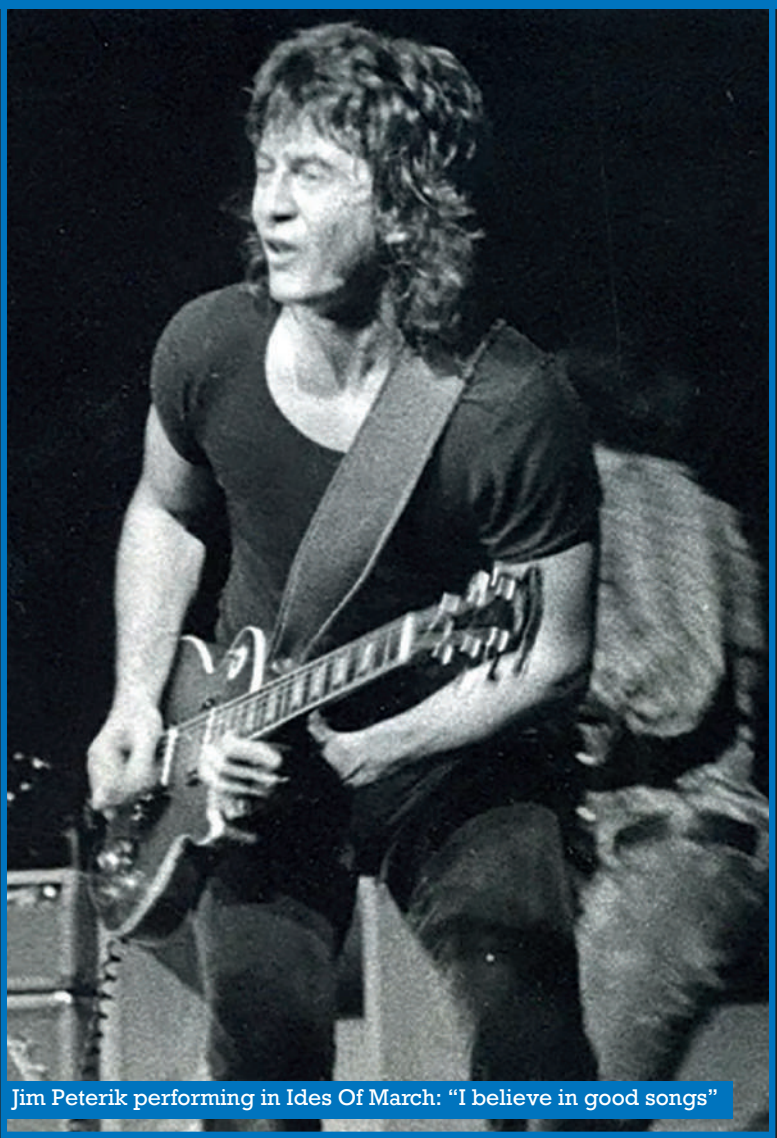
"To this day I have no hobbies other than collecting guitars and great hi-fi gear and studio gear," he says. "My poor Karen. She tries to break me into other interests and I go along with that, hikes in the mountains and

JIM PETERIK

so on. But she knows in my head I'm writing a new song."

His slate during COVID has been full: writing with Brian Wilson for a new Beach Boys record; with his neighbour and close friend Dennis DeYoung for DeYoung's solo project; with Robert Lamm for a new Chicago record; writing and producing a new solo album, 'Tigress', featuring four female singers and due through the Frontiers label later this year; and working with his first group The Ides Of March and side gig Pride of Lions, both of which have new music forthcoming. Songwriting lies so deep in Peterik's subconscious mind that he often dreams songs:

"The secret is trying to remember. Sometimes you just get a snippet of it and that's enough. On the 'Tigress' album there are a couple of dream songs. On the Beach Boys project I dreamed a whole verse and they liked it. It's usually right near morning that this happens. In your dream of course, it's all fully produced and sounds absolutely brilliant. And then you wake up to the hard reality..."



Jim Peterik performing in Ides Of March: "I believe in good songs"

"I REMEMBER MY FIRST ROYALTY CHEQUE WAS $10,000 FOR 'VEHICLE'. I WAS COUNTING THE ZEROS. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I PUT IT RIGHT IN THE BANK. THE DRUMMER OF THE IDES OF MARCH STARTED CALLING ME 'LUCKY BUCKS'. I SAID, IT'S NOT EXACTLY LUCK...'"

PETERIK GREW up in post-war Berwyn, small-town Illinois that he remembers as, "Row after row of bungalows, largely a Czech community, and I'm 100 per cent Czech. I think of them as idyllic days. My dad worked at the phone company during the week, but at the weekends was a brilliant saxophone player with a Polka band called The Hi Hatters. When I was finally old enough to play saxophone in the grade school band I could sneak behind the bandstand and harmonise with him while everybody was Polka-ing. And the big treat came at midnight when I could hang with the boys, his band. We'd go to the White Castle hamburger joint and I'd be eating those sliders feeling like the king of the world.

"My dad had a better ear than me. I remember playing him 'Vehicle' and he had the whole thing down in two takes. He was very quick and intuitive, and passed a lot of that down to me. And I passed a lot of it down to Colin [Peterik's son], who has a career in music and owns a studio. It goes on down the line."

Like a lot of natural songwriters Peterik wasn't enchanted with the nuts and bolts of the way music is taught, and was anxious to strike out on his own.

"I took maybe a year and a half of piano lessons when I was about seven," he says. "I hated playing scales and said, 'f*ck this'. Well, maybe not 'f*ck this' at age seven. But more like 'mommy, I don't wanna practise...' Even then I was very enchanted by Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. I had two older sisters – Alice Ann who was 10 years older, and Janice who was 12 years older – and they were the ones who taught me ukulele. Suddenly The Ventures were doing 'Perfidia' and I was trying to figure that out on a four-string ukulele! So I begged my parents for a guitar. It was a piece of crap, but I figured out what to do with those two extra strings. Before you knew it I'd saved up enough for a pretty decent guitar, a Wandre out of Italy with an aluminium neck, and that became my whole world for three years."

Peterik's songwriting "started out really primitive, and everything I wrote sounded like something else. We put the very first record I made with The Ides Of March out ourselves, when we were still called The Shon Dels. One side was 'Like It Or Lump It' – great title – and the other was 'No Two Ways About It'. If you listen to it, one side sounds like The Kinks-meets-The Hollies-meets-Curtis Mayfield, and the other side sounds like The Beatles and all the British bands."

Survivor perform 'Eye Of The Tiger' on TV. The song was a monster worldwide hit

By 1966 Peterik had written and sung on The Ides' first hit, 'You Wouldn't Listen', released on the wonderfully named Parrot Records and reaching number 42 on the *Billboard* charts. He was 16 years old. As the Summer Of Love rolled through he was out on the road, a true innocent abroad.

"We were touring with the Allman Brothers before they were called the Allman Brothers, they were the Allman Joys at that time," he says. "We were nowhere near the Allman Joys, though. We thought we were a pretty good band, but when we saw them play we knew we still had a lot of work to do. Finally our manager signed us with Warner Bros. and we had a song called 'Factory Band' in '69 that should've been a hit. I *still* say it should've been a hit. It wasn't, but they let us do some more demos anyway.

"We recorded three songs, and as an afterthought we put this new song I'd written, 'Vehicle', on as a fourth track. We thought, 'ah it's a good dance number. It's really not a record though.' You're always your worst judge. Our manager sent it to Joe Smith at Warners and he said, 'Those first three are OK, but the fourth is a smash.'

"Sure enough it went to number two on the *Billboard* charts and suddenly we're really touring our asses off, doing pop festivals with the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin. They were crazy times. But none of us did drugs or drank. Robert Plant invited us to a big party in a penthouse in Winnipeg. Naively we thought, 'OK a party, like with cake and soda...' We show up and there was an orgy going on. Oh OK... We're not in Kansas any more. It was a real eye opener. After a while we excused ourselves. 'We're sorry Robert, but we're gonna go to Dunkin' Donuts across the street...'"

PETERIK WAS 19 when 'Vehicle' hit.

"We weren't impressed with our own fame at all," he remembers. "It seemed like something we knew we would go through. We'd had these small inoculations to fame back in '66. And we really respected our parents and they never really made rules. They taught by example and they were all really solid people. They were just great. We had no reason to rebel. Sometimes that kind of upbringing doesn't do anything for a kid, but it worked for us."

Nevertheless, Peterik's life was changing.

"I made money because I was the songwriter. The other guys were living mainly on weekly salaries and the shows we were doing. I remember my first royalty cheque was $10,000 for 'Vehicle'. I was counting the zeros. I couldn't believe it. I put it right in the bank. The drummer Mike Borch started calling me 'Lucky Bucks'. I said, it's not exactly luck, Mike...'

Photo: Getty Images/Ron Wolfson/Michael Ochs Archives

JIM PETERIK

As a writer Peterik was still in thrall to the music he loved listening to.

"'Vehicle' was very much influenced by Blood, Sweat & Tears, to the point that many people thought it *was* Blood, Sweat & Tears," he says. "We went to see Blood, Sweat & Tears at the Kinetic Playground in Chicago. We sat cross-legged on the floor and were blown away. Afterwards, I went up to [singer] David Clayton-Thomas and what a jerk, he totally blew me off. But it taught me a valuable lesson. I always remember this. Don't ever diss your fans."

Survivor photographed in 1984 with vocalist Jimi Jamison second from right. "I was writing for a beautiful voice."

"I FINALLY GOT THE CHANCE TO HUG SLY STALLONE AND THANK HIM FOR GIVING AN UNSUNG BAND LIKE SURVIVOR A SHOT AT THE TITLE WITH 'EYE OF THE TIGER'. IT WAS THE LUCKIEST BREAK OF MY F*CKIN' LIFE. AND REALLY A TERRIFIC SONG."

The Ides Of March kept searching for an identity, dropping the brass, swapping labels to RCA, and moving toward country rock. But by 1973 it was over. Peterik got a solo deal with Epic, released an album called 'Don't Fight This Feeling', and went out on tour with Boston and Heart.

"I was there for Boston's second ever gig at a theatre in downtown Chicago," he recalls. "Brad Delp was super, super nervous. He had stage fright, really. A few minutes before the show he says, 'Jim I can't go on...' The band were already out there. I said, 'You gotta do it, you f*ckin' asshole,' and I pushed him, *literally* pushed him, and he finally gets behind the mic. The next day, he said, 'Man, thank you. I needed that push...' By the fourth gig he was Sammy Davis Jr..."

Peterik's solo album morphed into the Jim Peterik Band and edged slowly toward Survivor, which came together when he met a 23-year-old guitar player called Frankie Sullivan.

"I came from a very different background to Frankie," Peterik says. "He was just a kid at the time, trying to work his way into the whole writing scene. It turned into a very good collaboration, maybe because of that difference. Some of the songs we wrote together I probably wouldn't have written in the same way."

But for a while it seemed as though Peterik might remain a gun for hire, as much in demand for his songwriting as for his band.

"John Kalodner originally signed Survivor to Atlantic and then we had to move to Epic because the subsidiary label we were on, Scotti Bros, changed distribution. John had been a little gopher at [Atlantic president] Jerry Greenberg's office when I had the Jim Peterik Band, and he never forgot that. He really liked my songwriting on the first Survivor album. So Kalodner became not only Survivor's mentor, but my *personal* mentor as well. He put me together with Sammy Hagar, 38 Special, and also Aerosmith, although those Aerosmith songs never came out for some reason.

"Kalodner is a strange bird to say the least, but he's absolutely incredible at seeing something in a band or artist. Frankie Sullivan used to get down on me for writing with other bands, but I couldn't have written those songs with any other people. Give me a riff and an idea and I'll go with it."

PETERIK WAS about to enter his prime.

"It probably was only when I started Survivor in '78 that I really began to find my voice as a writer. When we started Survivor we wanted to be Foreigner in the same way that our role models in The Ides Of March had been Blood, Sweat & Tears. Frankie really loved Foreigner. We didn't try to completely clone them, but we did take certain cues from them. The first album

[1979's 'Survivor'] is kinda like Foreigner *lite*. On the second album [1981's 'Premonition'] we started defining our own sound properly, and it's really not like anything else. That's the point when I really started finding my voice."

"I could write very quickly, but the songs weren't all good... Frankie was great at separating the good ones from the not-so-good ones. 'Can we hear that one again, Jim?' He had a very good ear. We were maybe more intelligent than a lot of the groups around us. The '80s was not known for great intellect. A lot of the music then was just slam, bam, thank you ma'am. We got away with a lot more..."

Peterik's life and career changed forever with one song, 'Eye Of The Tiger', released on 31 May 1982, a day after Sylvester Stallone's film *Rocky III*. If Survivor were relatively unknown, then Stallone was the exact opposite, one of the biggest movie stars in the world.

"He's a really good scriptwriter. He hits the human chord very strongly. He's a genius really," Peterik says. "We had a rough cut of the opening of the movie and we rented a Betamax Pro and watched it at the kitchen table. We saw Mr T rising up, a real fearsome character. Those first three minutes, we put it in the Betamax and we heard '*duh, duh, duh, another one bites the dust*.' Queen. By this time I was on a first name basis with Stallone, so I called him up and said, 'What's going on? You've already got a song for the beginning of the movie...' He said, 'No man, Queen wouldn't let us use it.'

"You look at all those 'what ifs' and, you know, it just unfolded the way it should have. Queen said no and we got our chance. We begged Stallone to send the whole movie, which he wasn't supposed to do. But he did, and Rocky's trainer [played by Burgess Meredith] said this one line, 'You gotta have the eye of the tiger...' and it was like, BAM! We ripped that line straight from the script. It was a day at the beach for us. I was used to writing songs off personal experience and that's not always easy. This *was* easy, because here's *the story*. Here it is, and here's the pulse. The first thing I did was put my Les Paul around my neck and start going 'dug a dug a dug' [he sings the famous opening riff.]"

When you write a song like that, do you know it's going to be a hit?

"Ah well... yeah..." he concedes. "It was a smash. But if you told me it'd still be relevant in 2021 I'd have told you to get out of town. It hasn't really diminished. A couple of times Stallone came to Chicago to promote a book he was doing and we were on the same show. We're back in the dressing rooms and I finally got the chance to hug him and thank him for giving an unsung band like Survivor a shot at the title. It's true. If it had been Queen – well they'd already made it big. It was the luckiest break of my f*ckin' life. And really a terrific song."

Jim with his wife of 49 years, Karen

'EYE OF The Tiger' spent six weeks as US number one and was a huge hit right across the globe. The 'Eye Of The Tiger' album went to number two in the States. But, as with many overwhelming hits, it proved hard to follow.

"The follow up to a platinum album, we didn't handle it well," Peterik admits. "To try to live up to it you end up shooting yourself in the foot. [1983's] 'Caught In The Game' was probably our weakest album. [Vocalist] Dave Bickler was having throat problems. Frankie was working on production and was taking a week at a time to get a snare

Photos: Getty Images/Richard E. Aaron/Redferns; Getty Images/Jonathon Ziegler/Patrick McMullan

JIM PETERIK

drum sound. We were intimidated by our success. I think the album has its moments. I like three or four cuts on it, but I hear the strain in the band, the amount of time it took to make the thing. But once we got that out of our system and were forced to change singers, the original producer Ron Nevison came back in and we hit a new stride."

Bickler left Survivor in '83 and underwent surgery to remove nodules on his vocal chords.

"That's when we were lucky enough to get Jimi Jamison as our singer, and he's probably my favourite of all the singers I've worked with," Peterik says. "I loved Dave Bickler and his earthy sound, but he had to leave for throat problems and needed a couple of years off, which we couldn't give him.

"Frank Rand, my former manager said, 'There's this group called Cobra and I think they're ready to break up.' He sent me their album. The songs weren't that good, but there was something about the singer's voice that was just magical. Two days before Kevin Chalfant, who's a great singer, had auditioned and we were ready to give him the nod. [Chalfant had made his name with 707 and later became singer for The Storm.] But then Jimi Jamison came in and he blew us all away. Frankie and I had just finished a song called 'Broken Promises'. I taught it to Jimi and he sang it back so quickly that I said, 'Man, did you hear this somewhere before?'

"I played him [power ballad] 'The Search Is Over' and he's got this internal tape recorder. He starts singing it and gets to that high part – '*and then I look into your eyes*' – and his voice cracked. I said, 'I think we'll have to lower that.' And Jimi looks at me real hurt and says, 'Ah man give me half a chance...' So we played it again in E Flat and he nailed it. I never doubted him after that."

"EVERYTHING WAS TURNING TO GOLD, BUT OF COURSE YOU GET YOUR COMEUPPANCE. I THINK MY FAVOURITE SURVIVOR ALBUM IS PROBABLY THE LEAST POPULAR, 'TOO HOT TO SLEEP'."

WITH JAMISON on board Survivor cut 1984's 'Vital Signs', a record that would become a landmark of the new AOR genre and include classic Peterik/Sullivan tunes like 'I Can't Hold Back', 'High On You', and 'The Search Is Over', all Top 20 hits.

'Vital Signs' was a happy album and the music reflects a happy band," Peterik says. "We were very thankful to have *Rocky*, but we really wanted to prove ourselves. And then we were out on our own and selling platinum. As a songwriter I tend to write for the singer, and with Jimi I was writing for a really beautiful voice. It sent me in a more pop rock direction. The original band was a sausage fest, but we inherited all these female fans. Suddenly it became a slightly different audience."

Stallone and Rocky were about to enter Peterik's life again, though. *Rocky IV*, with its big East vs West storyline, was being edited in 1985, and Stallone once more asked Peterik and Sullivan if they could come up with a song that somehow caught the mood of the film. It was a risk, but the tune they produced, 'Burning Heart', was another huge hit.

"It was fresh meat for me," Peterik says. "I'd never

written anything I suppose you'd call political. But the song is more than just political, because everybody has that struggle. The original opening line for the chorus was '*In the human heart... just about to burst*' and Stallone goes, 'every line apart from that first one is great. You gotta do better...' And to be completely honest I don't know if it was Frankie or Robin Laing, who was the music supervisor, or even Stallone who said, 'No, it's gotta be *burning* heart...' I know / didn't come up with it."

Survivor's sixth album, 'When Seconds Count' – another AOR big-hitter – rounded out the run of hits in 1986. Everything Peterik touched seemed to turn to gold, and after the crisis in confidence that followed 'Eye Of The Tiger' he might have struggled once more. Yet, "I was more on the confident side this time. I'd run into a writer or band member and I'd say, 'You should be writing with me.' Everything was turning to gold, but of course you get your comeuppance. I think my favourite Survivor album is probably the least popular, 'Too Hot To Sleep' [released in 1988]."

The record emerged just as radio rock was on the way out. 'Appetite For Destruction' and later 'Nevermind' and 'Ten' were about to change the face of US music, and Survivor became trapped by their times, as all bands eventually are. They went on hiatus in 1988 and over the next couple of decades re-emerged in various combinations, alternating between Jamison and Bickler as frontmen. Peterik left permanently in 1996, although he's a credited songwriter on a few tunes on 2006's 'Reach'. He was saddened and shocked by Jamison's premature death in 2014 from a drug-related stroke at the age of 63. Two weeks before he died Jamison had left Peterik a voicemail, which Peterik returned, but they never got the chance to catch up.

"It was just devastating," he says of the singer's death. "I had a call from Amy, Jimi's daughter, and I said, 'Is it true?' We were both sobbing."

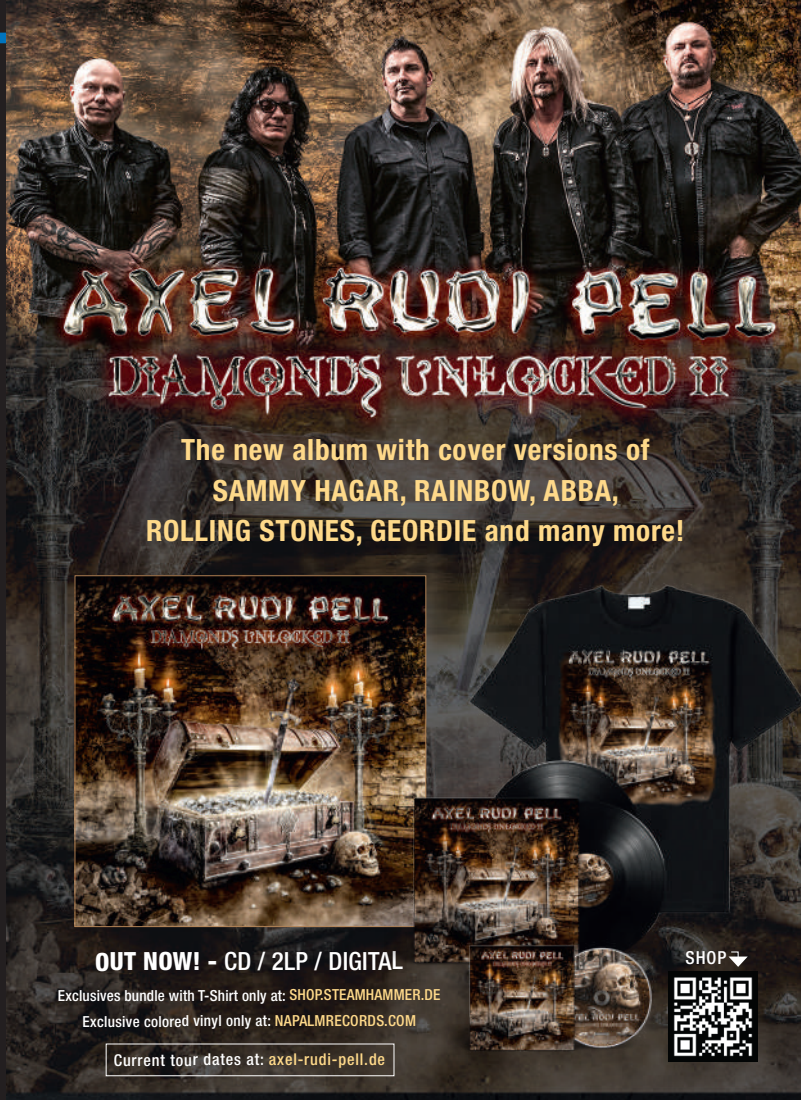
AFTER SURVIVOR Peterik reformed The Ides Of March, created Pride Of Lions, and wrote, wrote, wrote, everything from hard rock to smooth jazz. His canon is large, his credit a mark of songwriting quality. In 2010 he was even asked to write a book on how it's done.

"It's called *Songwriting For Dummies*, which is a stupid title, but it's a very popular series," he says. "When I got the assignment I got a call from a friend in the business, Dave Austin. He said, 'you could write a book.' But I almost gave up on it. I liked to think of the songwriting process as magic. Don't make me *analyse* what I do. But we broke it down. Finally I convinced myself. You know, sometimes you're humming something on the highway and you realise it's a tune that doesn't exist. So rather than it be technical – though there's a bit of that – a lot of it is instinctive.

"It's pretty weird. I wrote 'The Search Is Over' in my imagination when I was driving along the freeway. I couldn't wait to get home and get it down. I had the verse, the chorus, the modulation. I hit the piano and it worked just like I thought it would. When you're free and your imagination is free to go, you really can do anything. So I work mostly out of my imagination. Then again, sometimes I'll pick up a Les Paul and just start riffing, and a different kind of song comes from that. Other times, all I'll do is sit at the piano and plunk away and see what comes out."

It's a system that has served Jim Peterik better than most, and he's not about to start changing now.

Photo: Courtesy of Jim Peterik


AXEL RUDI PELL
DIAMONDS UNLOCKED II
The new album with cover versions of
SAMMY HAGAR, RAINBOW, ABBA,
ROLLING STONES, GEORDIE and many more!
OUT NOW! - CD / 2LP / DIGITAL
Exclusives bundle with T-Shirt only at: SHOP.STEAMHAMMER.DE
Exclusive colored vinyl only at: NAPALMRECORDS.COM
Current tour dates at: axel-rudi-pell.de
SHOP

CROWN

CHICAGO LEGENDS STYX HAVE the kind of pedigree that makes them perfect *Rock Candy Mag* cover material. Their music, a cunning mix of pomp, prog, and occasionally pop drove rock fans wild – and US rock fans in particular – during their late-'70s and early-'80s heyday. Between 1977 and 1981, the band notched four multi-platinum albums in the States, such was their commercial clout.

On 'The Grand Illusion', 'Pieces Of Eight', 'Cornerstone', and 'Paradise Theatre' the band – vocalist and keyboardist Dennis DeYoung, guitarists and vocalists Tommy Shaw and James 'JY' Young, bassist Chuck Panozzo, and his drumming brother John – created any number of songs that have come to be recognised as *bona fide* classics. The group's creative hit rate was astonishing. Reeling off just a small selection of their wonderful songs from this period shows how many times Styx hit the bullseye. 'Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)', 'Come Sail Away', 'Blue Collar Man (Long Nights)', 'Renegade', 'Lights', 'Boat On The River', 'Too Much Time On My Hands', 'The Best of Times'. Wow!

IT'S NO secret that there were often creative tensions within the band as the five members tried to harmonise their muso-ish instincts with their desire to have proper shiny hit records. Nothing highlighted that push and pull better than the song 'Babe', the band's only US number one single from December of 1979. The super-wimpy ballad was written by DeYoung for his wife Suzanne and while it's a great tearjerker ballad and sold absolutely shedloads, Jimi Hendrix it isn't. Which didn't entirely please JY, in particular.

With tensions intensifying Tommy Shaw was the first to jump ship, leaving the band in 1984, but the group didn't last much longer, going into hibernation after the 'Caught In The Act' live album of April 1984.

Styx came back together in 1990, with Shaw replaced by Glen Burtnik. But by the end of 1991, and with grunge music starting to dominate the US rock scene, the group disbanded, only to return once more in 1995 with Shaw back in the fold.

John Panozzo sadly succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver in July 1996 at the age of just 47, and was replaced

The current Styx line-up that recorded new album 'Crash Of The Crown' L-R: Chuck Panozzo (bass), Ricky Phillips (bass), Todd Sucherman (drums), Tommy Shaw (guitar and vocals), James 'JY' Young (guitar and vocals), Lawrence Gowan (keyboards and vocals)

Photo: Rick Diamond

Not only are Chicago pomp rockers **Styx** a group with a glittering history, they're also a band that's still producing top notch rock music that speaks loudly and proudly of their glorious past. *Rock Candy Mag* celebrates this legendary act with 16 pages of pure, unadulterated Styx-hem!

JEWELS!

by Todd Sucherman, who had already been filling in for John though his illness. In what was becoming a familiar pattern 1999's 'Brave New World' album led to more internal conflict. Dennis DeYoung departed to be replaced by Lawrence Gowan.

With Chuck Panozzo suffering health problems linked to HIV Glen Burtnik returned, this time on bass, leaving Panozzo free to concentrate on his wellbeing and contribute to the group as and when he could.

Former The Babys and Bad English man Ricky Phillips in turn replaced Burtnik in 2003 and finally Styx found some stability, which continues up to this day.

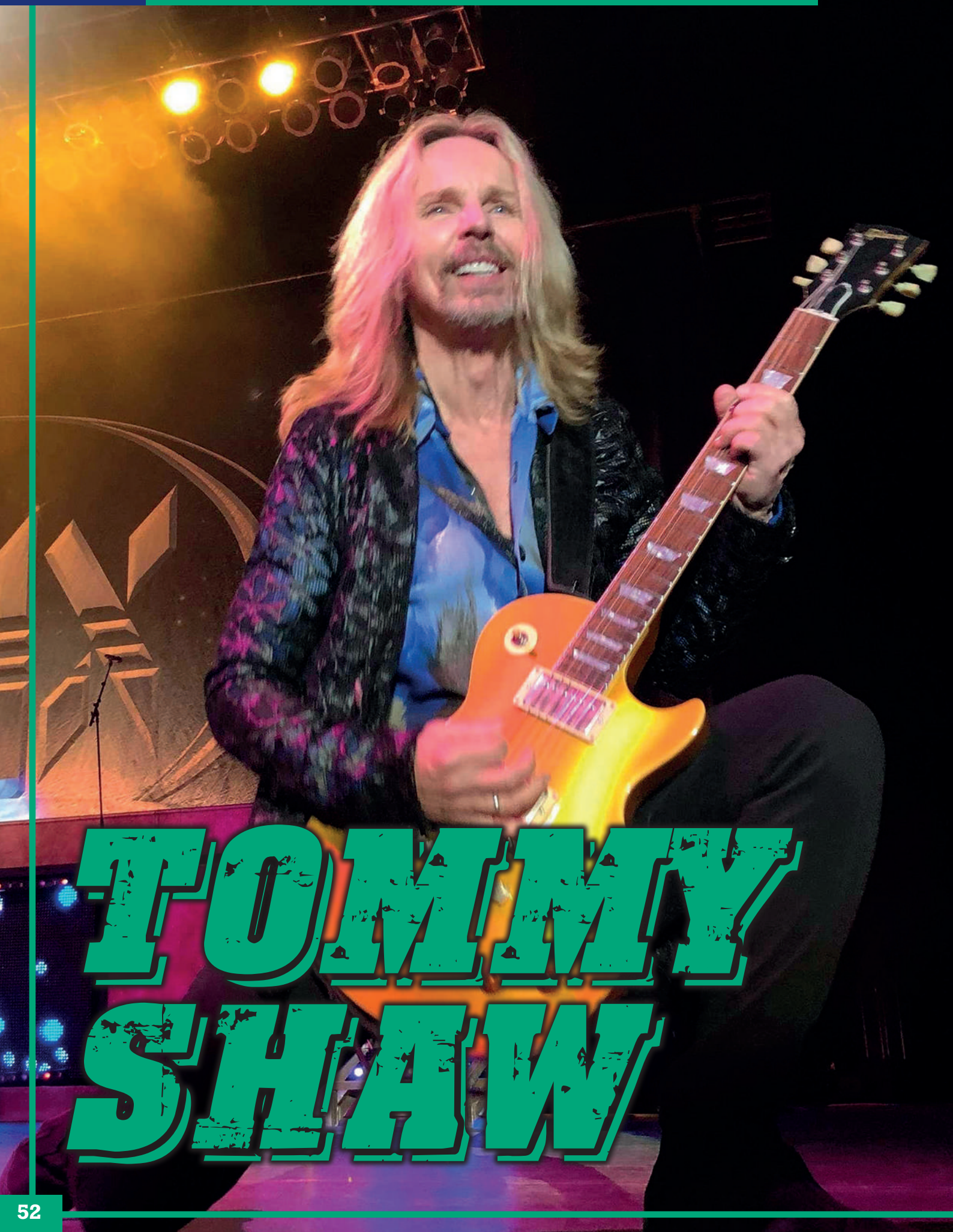
Over the course of the next 18 years the band have worked hard on the road, while at the same time releasing three new albums. The first, 2005's 'Big Bang Theory', was a selection of covers. But 2017's 'The Mission' and this year's 'Crash Of The Crown' are both full sets of original material. And guess what? Styx's latest studio album, their 17th, is a full-on return to the band's prog and pomp roots, a superb collection of 15 songs full of deep-seated poise and purpose that prove Styx are still a vital creative force just shy of 50 years after they first formed.

AS YOU know, at *Rock Candy Mag* we're all about the retro. But when a heritage band of such stature releases new music that stands shoulder to shoulder with their very best work, then it would be churlish in the extreme not to hail the achievement.

That's why now is the perfect time to dive deep into the saga of Styx, with exclusive interviews with all six current members of the band – Young, Shaw, Panozzo, Gowan, Phillips, and Sucherman – together with intimate appraisals of the four major albums from the band's classic period delivered by the members who helped craft them.

We're proud to be bringing you this massive 16-page cover story on Styx, not only one of rock's great survivors, but a living, breathing phenomenon that still has plenty to say...

Howard Johnson



TOMMY SHAW

THERE APPEARS TO BE A LOOSE KIND OF CONCEPT FOR THE NEW 'CRASH OF THE CROWN' ALBUM...
"The general idea was to write about what the world was going through at the time we were making it, and reflect that through landmark events in history. But it all came together without any great plan. I guess we're all old hippies and the thing we most wanted to stress in the lyrics was the simple fact that we should love one another and try to forgive people for their negative actions. History teaches us that good things come from being happy and positive. The darkness happens when you forget that, and that's what we've stressed on this album."

IS IT FAIR TO SAY THESE NEW SONGS HERALD A RETURN TO THE BAND'S PROGRESSIVE ROOTS?
"Definitely. For me 'Equinox', 'The Grand Illusion', and 'Pieces Of Eight' are the three albums that are touchstone releases for Styx. Those are the records we most aspire to emulate. The process began with 'The Mission', but we've now taken it even further. On 'Crash Of The Crown' we've dared to push the envelope again. We've gone back to the band's golden period when we were very progressive. But what we haven't tried to do is *recreate* that era. I hope we've taken the influence from that time in our career and brought it right up to date."

SO IS IT WEIRD FOR YOU THAT STYX ARE SUDDENLY BEING HAILED AS PIONEERS OF AMERICAN PROG?
"It's not weird. It's wonderful. When the band first started out we were all inspired by The Beatles. But then Yes and Genesis came along and those groups showed us what was possible in music. We wanted to reflect their sense of adventure in *our* music. We were really into all that stuff and I guess we were among the first groups to do it in America."

> "FOR ME 'EQUINOX', 'THE GRAND ILLUSION', AND 'PIECES OF EIGHT' ARE THE THREE ALBUMS THAT ARE TOUCHSTONE RELEASES FOR STYX. THOSE ARE THE RECORDS WE MOST ASPIRE TO EMULATE."

THE BAND WAS SERIOUSLY SUCCESSFUL IN THE LATE '70S AND EARLY '80S. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THAT PERIOD OF YOUR CAREER?
"Not much! I indulged in every vice imaginable, really living the sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll lifestyle. I made all the mistakes you can imagine. I was young and stupid... and it was so much fun! But I honestly can't remember anything! All know is that I *really* enjoyed myself."

'BABE' WAS AN ABSOLUTE MONSTER OF A HIT FOR YOU BACK IN 1979. BUT DID ITS EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS LEAD TO A LOT OF PEOPLE SEEING STYX AS SIMPLY A BALLAD BAND?
"There are certain radio stations who only play our ballads, so even now some people will only know us for songs like 'Babe'. But that's OK. Those songs are part of our history. I'd hope some of those people would have been interested enough to check out what else we've done. But we're not unique in this. It's happened to other bands too. And at least they know us for something."

ARE THERE UNHEARD STYX RECORDINGS FROM THAT CLASSIC PERIOD THAT YOU'D CONSIDER RELEASING?
"You may not believe this, but there aren't any. We were the kind of band that only wrote enough material for each album. We'd rehearse and write after coming off the road, and when there were sufficient songs to fill both sides of an LP we went in and recorded them. There was no waste at all. There are literally no unfinished tracks lying in a vault somewhere just waiting to be discovered. We were very efficient."

YOU PLAYED IN TWO OTHER SUCCESSFUL ROCK BANDS IN THE '90S, DAMN YANKEES AND SHAW-BLADES. BUT IS STYX YOUR SPIRITUAL HOME?
"It is. There's a unique feeling between all of us in the Styx camp. It doesn't matter what your job is, you're part of a family. This isn't an organisation. It's a community."

THIS CURRENT STYX LINE-UP HAS BEEN TOGETHER 18 YEARS, WHICH IS A LONG TIME. WHY DO YOU THINK EVERYTHING'S BEEN SO SETTLED FOR SO LONG?
"It's because we have love and respect for one another. There are days when one of us goes off the rails a little, but we all understand that stuff can happen and it's quickly forgotten. There's a special feeling between everyone involved with Styx these days – the musicians, road crew, management."

YOU, JY, AND CHUCK PANOZZO ARE THE ONLY REMAINING MEMBERS FROM WHAT MANY CONSIDER THE CLASSIC '70S LINE-UP. ARE YOU THE *DE FACTO* LEADERS OF THE GROUP?
"Not at all. This is a band of equals, of peers. Everybody is encouraged to express their opinions and ideas. I suppose the other three may look to JY, Chuck, and me to some extent, because we've been in the band for so long. But that's not because we insist on it. And we never would."

BETWEEN 2003 AND 2017 THERE WAS NO NEW MUSIC FROM STYX. BUT NOW THERE HAVE BEEN TWO ALBUMS OF ORIGINAL MATERIAL IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS. WHY DID THAT CHANGE?
"A combination of things. For a long time we couldn't get new music played on the radio, which meant there was a lot less exposure for anything that we did. Plus we were a band in transition. In 2003 the new line-up had only just come together and we were working out how to move forward with our music. But the main reason why we stopped recording was because the spark had gone. There was no drive in the band to write and record new material. I was working on songs with Will Evankovich. He was my new writing partner and would go on to become Styx's producer. But what we were doing together didn't seem to fit in with Styx. It was more suited to a solo album, which is why I put out 'The Great Divide' in 2011.

"Then Will and I started to talk about trying to recreate the Styx sound of the '70s, when Barry Mraz was our studio engineer. We both got very excited about the idea of taking the band back to that era in terms of the way our music could sound. Once we had the idea in our heads and told the others about it our collective mojo returned, and suddenly we were ready to make a new album. Really it was all about being excited by the prospect of a new Styx album. Because if we in the band weren't energised by the notion of recording a new record, why would anyone else care?"

YOUR MUSIC HAS BEEN FEATURED ON MANY A TV PROGRAMME. ARE STYX IN DANGER OF BECOMING

Interview by Malcolm Dome. Photo: Jason Powell

The Styx line-up during the band's classic 1977-1981 period. Clockwise from top left: Chuck Panozzo (bass), James 'JY' Young (guitar and vocals), John Panozzo (drums), Tommy Shaw (guitar and vocals), Dennis DeYoung (keyboards and vocals)

SOME KIND OF NATIONAL TREASURES?
"I don't know about that, but I love it when our music is used on television. Getting your music in front of people who maybe aren't too familiar with you can only be a good thing, because it gets the band new fans. There's never a downside to getting TV exposure, so the more times it happens the better! I particularly loved the fact that the guys from *South Park* parodied 'Come Sail Away' many years ago. I remember being at [erstwhile Damn Yankees and Shaw-Blades band mate] Jack Blades's house. Jack's son James was very young at the time and he couldn't believe I was in this band whose song Eric Cartman had just sung! We've just given permission for 'Too Much Time On My Hands' [from the 'Paradise Theatre' album] to be used in the *American Dad* cartoon series. We know it'll be another parody, but it's not designed to belittle the band. At the end of the day you have to have a sense of humour about yourself and about your music."

NEXT YEAR STYX CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY. ANY PLANS TO MARK THE OCCASION?
"There are just so many anniversaries these days that people are always being reminded about. I know that next year is also the 45th anniversary of the release of 'The Grand Illusion', but for the most part we just shrug our shoulders. I can't see us doing anything special to celebrate our 50th anniversary, because we prefer to look forward rather than backward. These anniversaries are important to the fans and we leave them to celebrate them however they choose. But what matters more to the band is what we'll be doing in two or three years' time. We're not just about nostalgia. We still have a lot to say that's relevant musically."

IN THE PAST YOU'VE DONE TOURS PLAYING CLASSIC ALBUMS IN THEIR ENTIRETY. ARE THERE ANY PLANS TO DO SOMETHING SIMILAR IN THE FUTURE?
"We do hope to go down that path again. But you know which album we'd do from start to finish? 'Crash Of The Crown'. We've been so jazzed playing these songs that I'm sure we'll do the whole album onstage very soon. That's the next one in our sights anyway."

AND FINALLY TOMMY, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT STYX STILL HAVEN'T BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME?
"Well we'd love to be in it, but I certainly don't lose any sleep over it. To be honest I hope we get inducted *after* I've died. Then at least I won't have to pay $5000 for the 'honour' of attending the ceremony. Or $10,000 if I want to take my wife!"

Photo: Courtesy of UME

"THE GRAND ILLUSION" UNLOCKED

TOMMY: "That was the game changing album for us. We knew in the studio that it was special and when we were recording the songs everything seemed to align. It was close to perfection, as if it was always meant to be a massive and pivotal moment in our career.

"While we were recording someone came in with the Oberheim 8-Voice synthesizer to show us how it worked. The guy was a salesman and spent a few days going through it all, but we just wanted him to leave so we could try out this state-of-the-art technology ourselves. It was so new that nobody had ever put it on an album before, but we used it on virtually every song! It gave us an unusual sound and immediately separated Styx from everyone else. That's part of the reason why 'The Grand Illusion' was so different to any other album at that time.

"The entire record flows from start to finish, but if I have to choose one song that means a lot to me that would be 'Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)'. It was done in a major key and I got to play acoustic guitar on it."

CHUCK: "There are some really beautiful songs on 'The Grand Illusion' and you can tell just how good those numbers are when you're playing them live. The fans' reaction to them says it all. I love 'Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)' and 'Come Sail Away', and those numbers get the same response from an audience now as they did in 1977. That's amazing."

> "WHEN WE WERE RECORDING THE SONGS EVERYTHING SEEMED TO ALIGN. IT WAS CLOSE TO PERFECTION."
> **TOMMY SHAW**

JY: "I think 'The Grand Illusion' is the definitive Styx album. The music, the engineering, the Greek imagery [on the cover], the whole vibe of what we did... It all fit together beautifully. We touched the mainstream nerve at just the right time. Suddenly these bums from the south side of Chicago were with a major record company, selling concert tickets and headlining.

"Everyone was pulling in the same direction. Back in those days we still shared hotel rooms. That really helped us build a team spirit and find a way to do things collectively.

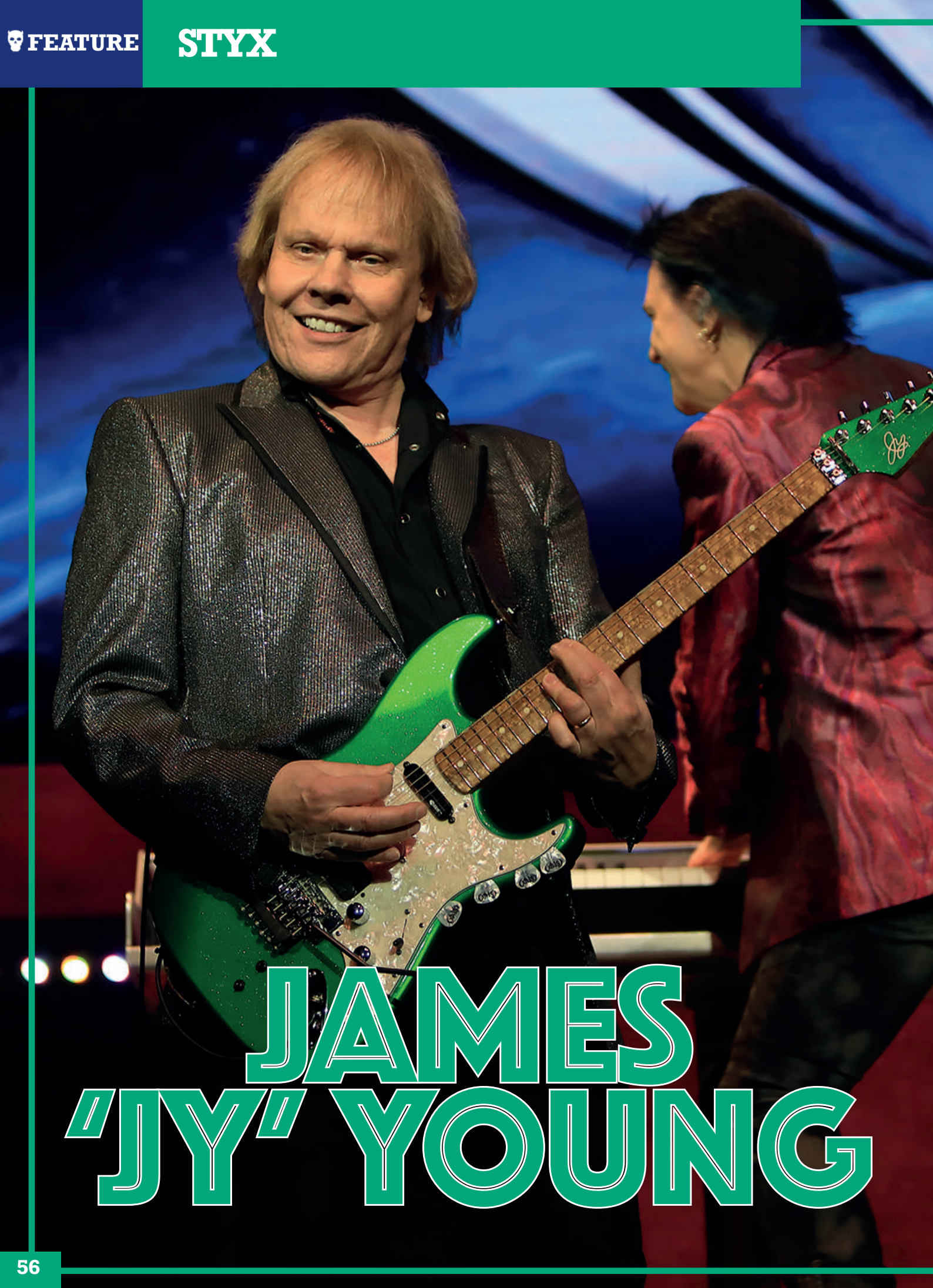
"'The Grand Illusion' was a conceptual thing based around overblown capitalism, and that's what 'Superstars' was about. It was aspirational. You could see us on the television doing the rock star thing, but we were saying that inside we were all pretty much the same.

"'Come Sail Away' was a standout number for me. Dennis originally wrote it about escapism, and as a comment about how life can be difficult. *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* came out the same year, so space was a big thing at the time, and I was the one that said: 'What if we add an outer space twist at the end of it?' That was my small contribution to that song."

'THE GRAND ILLUSION'
Released: 7 July 1977

Produced by Styx
Recorded at: Paragon Recording Studios, Chicago

TRACK LISTING
The Grand Illusion (Dennis DeYoung)
Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man) (Tommy Shaw)
Superstars (James Young, Dennis DeYoung, Tommy Shaw)
Come Sail Away (Dennis DeYoung)
Miss America (James Young)
Man In The Wilderness (Tommy Shaw)
Castle Walls (Dennis DeYoung)
The Grand Finale (Dennis DeYoung, James Young, Tommy Shaw)



JAMES "JY" YOUNG

THE NEW STYX ALBUM 'CRASH OF THE CROWN' IS VERY MUCH A POMP ROCK ALBUM. DO YOU THINK OLD-SCHOOL STYX FANS WILL BE PLEASED TO HEAR THE BAND SOUNDING THIS WAY?
"Definitely. We made our way with prog at the start and I don't think there's any doubt that 'The Grand Illusion' is quite a proggy record. 'Pieces Of Eight' was a little more rocking, but this time we really pushed back into that progressive direction once again."

'COTC' WAS MAINLY THE BABY OF TOMMY SHAW AND PRODUCER WILL EVANKOVICH, WITH SOME HELP FROM LAWRENCE GOWAN. WHY DID YOU MAKE LESS OF A CONTRIBUTION THIS TIME AROUND?
"I was the least involved creatively. Tommy has become the Alpha Dog of Styx, and rightfully so. I did have some bits that I could have put forward, but Will was suddenly producing [the session] and the next thing I knew we had a record out. Everything goes in cycles, though I'm not sure I'll be writing very much anymore. But I'm still firmly in this band."

THE PRESS RELEASE CLAIMS THAT THIS ALBUM'S THEME IS "A NEW ERA OF HOPE, SURVIVAL, AND PROSPERITY." GIVEN THE PROBLEMS OF CORONAVIRUS DO YOU THINK SOME PEOPLE MIGHT FIND THAT A LITTLE HARD TO SWALLOW?
"Well of course I didn't write that press release, but clearly this has been the most difficult time I can ever remember. I was born in 1949 and the Vietnam War wasn't great. But the world is in turmoil in so many ways that I think it's up to the artist to try to be a part of the answer and not part of the problem. It's our job to bring hope where there is none."

AFTER 17 STUDIO ALBUMS, CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE BAND'S LONGEVITY?
"It's *your* job to answer that. All I can say is that we survived a whole lot of stylistic ups and downs, and changes within the band, as well as record companies and radio stations telling us what was and wasn't popular. We've navigated some rough waters quite well. We were in the right place at the right time with the right stuff. I'm thankful for choosing the career path that I did."

SO WHAT MAKES STYX SPECIAL?
"I don't have a great answer to that either. It helps that we have Tommy Shaw, whom I'd never heard of until he replaced [guitarist] John [Curulewski after fifth album 'Equinox' in 1975]. Tommy's a great white blues guitar player and singer, and he really filled those shoes. The guy can pick up almost any stringed instrument there is and somehow play a song on it, and he's a great composer too."

CO-FOUNDING DRUMMER JOHN PANOZZO PASSED IN 1996 AND VOCALIST AND KEYBOARDIST DENNIS DEYOUNG EXITED IN '99. WITH BASS PLAYER CHUCK PANOZZO NOW A PART-TIME MEMBER OF THE GROUP, IS IT SOMEWHAT BITTERSWEET BEING THE ONLY REMAINING PERMANENT ORIGINAL MEMBER?
"Yes, of course, but it proves you can be big, dumb, and blond and make it through. Ours is an epic tale, but it's not your typical rock'n'roll story. Chuck was an art teacher when the band started out, and I do like the fact that Styx was kind of a middle-class success story."

WHICH VERSION OF THE STYX LINE-UP WAS YOUR PERSONAL FAVOURITE?
"Well... that's a good question."

THE CURRENT GROUP HAS EXISTED FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS AND WE KNOW THAT YOU'RE ALL VERY TIGHT. NOBODY'S TRYING TO DIMINISH THAT FACT, BUT...?
"I look back at the albums we made during the 1970s and 'Equinox' was a great record. John Curulewski was a big part of that, but when Tommy came in he really lifted us up. God bless John [Panozzo]. I love that man. He was crazy and wild and *such* a great player. But in terms of drumming ability Todd [Sucherman, Styx drummer since 1995] is clearly toward the top of the heap. Ricky Phillips is a phenomenal human being and bass player. Dennis DeYoung is a great talent, nobody's disputing that. But he's also a control freak. Ultimately, that's what broke up the [original] band. There are none of those problems with Lawrence [Gowan, DeYoung's replacement]. Will [Evankovich] is a great addition to what we have now, and as you point out the line-up is very stable. So I guess I would have to say that to me this current line-up is the best one."

OLDER STYX FANS REALLY CHERISH THE ERA BETWEEN 1977 AND 1981. HOW WAS IT TO LIVE THROUGH THAT PERIOD?
"Each of us was in our late twenties or early thirties and we'd finally understood how to make great records. At that point in the game we knew the right engineers and studios needed for that process. 1981 was the band's biggest year. 'Paradise Theatre' went to number one [in the States] when the others didn't quite get there. 'Cornerstone' had reached number two. Those were great times."

"DENNIS DEYOUNG AND I HAD MANY FAMOUS BATTLES OVER THE STYLE OF THE BAND, BUT ULTIMATELY WHAT CAME OUT OF THAT TENSION WAS GREAT MUSIC. AND WE SUCCEEDED THROUGH A COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE."

SO HOW DOES IT REALLY FEEL WHEN CHILDHOOD AMBITIONS OF PRIVATE JETS AND MULTI-PLATINUM RECORDS COME TRUE?
"Listen, when dreams become reality it's a glorious thing. But eventually you wake up and realise that to *stay* at the top of the heap you have to work even harder than you did getting there. Nobody really stays at the very top for too long. Dennis DeYoung and I had many famous battles over the style of the band, but ultimately what came out of that tension was great music. And we succeeded through a collective intelligence. During the pandemic I've had time to reflect upon all of this, and what I've decided is that I feel tremendously blessed that my career dreams were fulfilled. I guess I've lived kind of a charmed life."

DID STYX HAVE RIVALRIES WITH ANY OTHER BANDS IN THAT GREAT PERIOD?
"Oh sure. REO Speedwagon were the big ones. Irving Azoff was their manager and he was a kind of genius, so there was a lot of push and pull with him. As you probably know, Irving [once named by *Billboard* as the most powerful person in the music industry] rules the world now."

Interview by Dave Ling. Photo: Jason Powell

"1981 was the band's biggest year. 'Paradise Theatre' went to number one in America. Those were great times."

AT 71 YEARS OLD IT MUST BE HARDER TO WITHSTAND THE RIGOURS OF THE ROAD?
"Maybe a little, but I look back at the pandemic and I'm grateful that my family suffered no hospitalisations or deaths. I'm still healthy and strong. My plan to become the oldest man on the planet still continues."

TOMMY SHAW SAID RECENTLY: "AS LONG AS WE CAN STAND ON OUR OWN TWO FEET, AND SO LONG AS OUR VOICES HOLD OUT, STYX WON'T BE STOPPING." HE ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULDN'T MIND "TAKING HIS FINAL BREATH ON A STYX STAGE." DO YOU FEEL THE SAME?
"Oh absolutely. I've said this many times already, but I feel so blessed to do what I do. People have lost their jobs [in lockdown]. I'm not saying that COVID was a hoax, but with Donald Trump being president of the United States, and with the media and social media fanning the flames, I do believe there was a profound overreaction to something that deserved to be treated with a little more sanity. In my view it became this crazy, unnecessary worldwide panic. But fortunately we appear to be coming out the other side of it all. I hope so anyway."

STYX PLAYED THE LONDON PALLADIUM IN JUNE 2019. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME BACK TO THE UK?
"Definitely. I love getting on to planes to play concerts and I hope to do much more of that before I pass into the great beyond."

YOU'VE GOT QUITE A STORY TO TELL. HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WRITING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY?
"No. And that's because once something appears in print the mythology goes away... and I want the mythology to continue, Goddammit! The River Styx is Greek mythology, and the modern day mythology of Styx should remain for as long as possible."

Photo: Courtesy of UME

‘PIECES OF EIGHT’ UNLOCKED

TOMMY: “By this point we still hadn’t got the money that ‘The Grand Illusion’ had generated, so on a day-to-day basis things were very much as if we hadn’t yet made a big impact. The chemistry between the five us at that time was amazing. We were all on the same page and encouraging one another to be creative. We were still very close and were determined to take the style of ‘The Grand Illusion’ even further. It was a golden time. All that mattered was the music and pushing one another to be better and better. Money would eventually change all that, but at that point we were riding high on success and wanted nothing else but to carry on making music that satisfied us.

“I love the title track. It’s something we still play in our live set today. ‘Blue Collar Man (Long Nights)’ means a lot to both us and the fans, but it’s hard for me to pick out particular songs from ‘Pieces Of Eight’ because what makes the album work is the way it develops from start to finish.”

> “A LOT OF FANS NATURALLY RELATED TO ‘BLUE COLLAR MAN’ BECAUSE THEY CAME FROM BLUE COLLAR BACKGROUNDS JUST LIKE THE GUYS IN THE BAND.”
> **CHUCK PANOZZO**

CHUCK: “We had to really challenge ourselves with ‘Pieces Of Eight’, because if you don’t have the songs then you’re just another band. Every member who was writing brought something important to that record and we ended up with some great songs, especially ‘Renegade’ and ‘Blue Collar Man (Long Nights)’. A lot of fans naturally related to ‘Blue Collar Man’ because they came from blue collar backgrounds just like the guys who were in the band.

“But the most unique thing about ‘Pieces Of Eight’ was Dennis DeYoung recording some of it at St. James Cathedral in Chicago. We had to run cables down three floors, across the street and right into the cathedral to do it, and we were constantly worried that someone was going to cut those cables!”

JY: “‘Pieces of Eight’ probably isn’t as good as ‘The Grand Illusion’, but ‘Renegade’ is on there and that’s a lot of people’s favourite Styx song. I wrote ‘Great White Hope’ that opened the album. I’ve always been a massive sports fan and that song was all about putting yourself in the mind-space of being a title contender.

“‘Pieces Of Eight’ was a good, broad album for us, though I’d say ‘Paradise Theatre’ was the only other album to rival ‘The Grand Illusion’. *Rolling Stone* magazine described ‘Pieces Of Eight’ as ‘narcissistic slop’ in their review of it. Well if they said it, then it *must* be true, right?!”

‘PIECES OF EIGHT’
Released: 1 September 1978

Produced by Styx
Recorded at: Paragon Recording Studios, Chicago and St. James Cathedral, Chicago

TRACK LISTING
Great White Hope (James Young)
I’m O.K. (Dennis DeYoung, James Young)
Sing For The Day (Tommy Shaw)
The Message (Dennis DeYoung)
Lords Of The Ring (Dennis DeYoung)
Blue Collar Man (Long Nights) (Tommy Shaw)
Queen Of Spades (James Young, Dennis DeYoung)
Renegade (Tommy Shaw)
Pieces Of Eight (Dennis DeYoung)
Aku-Aku (Tommy Shaw)

CHUCK PANOZZO

STYX HAVE BEEN AROUND SINCE 1972. THAT'S A SERIOUSLY LONG TIME, ISN'T IT?
"The band was originally formed as something that kept my brother John, Dennis DeYoung and I off the streets. But the reason Styx has lasted so long is because the group has always been so diverse. It's not about hearing the same voice or the same song. That's thanks to the strength of the musicians and the variety of the material."

YOU HAD ENORMOUS COMMERCIAL SUCCESS BETWEEN 1977 AND 1981. WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE RIDING THAT PARTICULAR TRAIN?
"We were much younger of course, but when you look like Tommy Shaw then you're eternally young! We were lucky that A&M gave us a great deal of support and control, especially when it came to producing our own albums. Plus we toured a whole lot! At one point I had a cleaner who told me they were at my house more than I was!"

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE BAND?
"Styx has been my life. I'm the oldest guy in the group now and I've seen everyone who's been in Styx come and go from day one to the point where we now have the quintessential line-up. The guys here today are so dedicated and they're incredible musicians, singers and writers. For me to be part of that is just amazing. When John passed away I knew this band would be his legacy, and when I leave this planet it'll be my legacy too."

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER MOST ABOUT YOUR TWIN?
"Besides being very funny and able to defuse tense situations, he was just born to be a drummer. When you lose half your rhythm section that can be pretty devastating. Luckily Todd Sucherman walked in and picked up right from where John left off."

YOU WERE DIAGNOSED WITH HIV IN 1991 AND HAVE TWICE HAD CANCER. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STILL TO BE INVOLVED GIVEN YOUR HEALTH CONCERNS?
"It's very important to me. We talked about whether I could still do this full time, but there's a concern that if I did an entire tour I might get ill. Each day is a gift, because we're never guaranteed tomorrow. We only know today."

SO WHAT'S IT LIKE WORKING WITH RICKY PHILLIPS WHO ROUNDS OUT THE BASS PLAYING DUTIES?
"There's never been a sense of competition between us, only one of unity. Ricky's a great bassist!"

THERE'S ALWAYS A LOT OF LOVE AND SUPPORT FOR YOU WHENEVER YOU APPEAR ON STAGE...
"At first I never realised that the audience was cheering for me, but I do feel very grateful. The last time we played in England, at the London Palladium in 2019, it was one of the most thrilling experiences I've ever had. I had a little health issue before it that almost led to me not making the trip. But in the end I did and it was incredible."

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE STYX LINE-UP?
"It's always been about evolution. The success has always been based on how well the guys in the group worked together. The line-up with Dennis was great, but things happen and he's gone now. Although you can never replace a member – especially not your brother – you have to get someone in who's as good or better."

HOW ABOUT A FAVOURITE ALBUM?
"'Paradise Theatre' was a brilliant record with brilliant production. I loved the songs and I loved the tour we did to support it, because it featured one of our greatest stage presentations. I'd also go for 'The Grand Illusion'. I loved the epic feel it had, which was great for the time. Though if we recorded a similar-sounding album today I suspect that would be a big mistake."

AND TALKING OF ALBUMS TODAY, WHAT'S YOUR VERDICT ON 'CRASH OF THE CROWN'?
"Everything about it just feels right, but I love the contrast that 'Our Wonderful Lives' has with the other songs. Right now it feels like we really do have wonderful lives, because the vaccine has finally been able to change everything for us after the pandemic. Accentuate the positive!"

Interview by Dave Reynolds. Photo: Jason Powell

‘CORNERSTONE’ UNLOCKED

TOMMY: “This album was where things began to fall apart. We were now earning a lot of money and it led to problems within the band. ‘Cornerstone’ was the album where we moved away from the more progressive style that had made the previous two albums so successful, and the band took on a more pop rock approach. Why? I’m not sure. It seemed like the right thing to do. I guess the nature of the songs themselves dictated the fact that we went in this more AOR direction. The musical balance we’d had previously was spoilt, maybe because we were on a treadmill. We’d tour, write some new songs, go into the studio to record the next album, and then get straight back out on tour again. There was no respite.

“It’s easy to be wise after the event, but what we should have done was take a year off from the band before thinking about ‘Cornerstone’. Maybe all of us should have gone off and done solo albums, got certain things out of our system, then returned to Styx more refreshed. All of us were burnt out and that never bodes well for any album.

“If you ask me what songs stand out now I couldn’t even tell you. I have no clue what’s on the album. Maybe that says everything about what I think of it now.”

CHUCK: “I really loved ‘Lights’ and ‘Babe’, which was the huge hit from ‘Cornerstone’. ‘Boat On The River’ wasn’t a hit in the States, but it was very successful in Europe. I felt that song needed an acoustic stand-up bass on it, so someone asked me, ‘Well, can you play it?’ and I said ‘I’ll try, let’s see what happens!’”

JY: “I very much wanted us to be a rock band and not simply Dennis DeYoung’s back-up group. The album included ‘Babe’, which was an absolutely massive hit, but I didn’t want us to turn into Barry Manilow. God bless Barry, he’s a very talented man. And while I’ve never met him, I’m sure he’s a nice person. But I wanted to be Pete Townshend or Jimi Hendrix, and I couldn’t picture either of those guys doing a song like ‘Babe’. It was the same with ‘Boat On The River’, which Tommy wrote. I was like, ‘Why would we do a song like that?’ But Dennis believed people would like it. To be fair to Dennis, the song didn’t do anything in the States, but it was Top 5 in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, and in Israel too. I’ve met people from Europe who can sing that song backwards!”

> “THE ALBUM INCLUDED ‘BABE’, WHICH WAS AN ABSOLUTELY MASSIVE HIT, BUT I DIDN’T WANT US TO TURN INTO BARRY MANILOW.”
> **JAMES ‘JY’ YOUNG**

‘CORNERSTONE’
Released: 19 October 1979

Produced by Styx
Recorded at: Pumpkin Studios, Oak Lawn, Illinois

TRACK LISTING
Lights (Tommy Shaw, Dennis DeYoung)
Why Me (Dennis DeYoung)
Babe (Dennis DeYoung)
Never Say Never (Tommy Shaw)
Boat On The River (Tommy Shaw)
Borrowed Time (Dennis DeYoung, Tommy Shaw)
First Time (Dennis DeYoung)
Eddie (James Young)
Love In The Midnight (Tommy Shaw)

‘PARADISE THEATRE’ UNLOCKED

TOMMY: “After veering off in the wrong direction on ‘Cornerstone’ it could have been that the next album would take us even further away from where Styx should have been. But that’s not what happened. Somehow we got ourselves back on track and it ended up being a lot of fun making ‘Paradise Theatre’. It was probably the last time that the five of us all got on really well and all agreed on what we should be doing musically.

“I have very fond memories of the way we set about doing ‘Paradise Theatre’. The fact that it had such a strong concept helped us a lot, and everyone knew what was needed to make it work. We were all committed to the cause and there was no dissent at all. The tour in support of the album was also hugely enjoyable, and I especially loved the theatrical presentation we had. But when I look back I now realise that it was the final moment of calm and unified commitment before egos took over and ripped the band apart. It was a bittersweet moment in our career. ‘Sweet’ because it was a great album and a joy to make. ‘Bitter’ because it ended up being the last time we all got along.”

CHUCK: “Because ‘Paradise Theatre’ was based on the story of an old theatre in Chicago it had real meaning for us, as it was about somewhere we all came from. The opening song on the album, ‘Rockin’ The Paradise’, felt special to me, and we still play that number live.”

JY: “I still love ‘Paradise Theatre’. All these years later both the concept and the music still really stand up. ‘Snowblind’ was a song that was credited to Dennis and me. In my mind I saw it as a rock song, but Dennis felt it should be the way it came out; not exactly mid-tempo but in that ballpark. I created the dark mood with my vocal parts, but Tommy really brought that song home with his vocal performance.

“It felt like we could do no wrong at that point. We played 110 sold out arenas in North America, then played all over Europe, and ended up in Japan for the first time. It was incredible. We had four consecutive multi-platinum albums, so you could say that we made it to the top of the mountain.”

> “I STILL LOVE ‘PARADISE THEATRE’. ALL THESE YEARS LATER BOTH THE CONCEPT AND THE MUSIC STILL REALLY STAND UP.”
> **JAMES ‘JY’ YOUNG**

‘PARADISE THEATRE’
Released: 19 January 1981

Produced by Styx
Recorded at: Pumpkin Studios, Oak Lawn, Illinois

TRACK LISTING
A.D. 1928 (Dennis DeYoung)
Rockin’ The Paradise (Dennis DeYoung, James Young, Tommy Shaw)
Too Much Time On My Hands (Tommy Shaw)
Nothing Ever Goes As Planned (Dennis DeYoung)
The Best Of Times (Dennis DeYoung)
Lonely People (Dennis DeYoung)
She Cares (Tommy Shaw)
Snowblind (James Young, Dennis DeYoung)
Half-Penny, Two-Penny (James Young, Ray Brandle)
A.D. 1958 (Dennis DeYoung)
State Street Sadie (Dennis DeYoung)

LAWRENCE GOWAN

FOR THOSE WHO MAY NOT BE UP TO SPEED, CAN YOU GIVE US THE LOWDOWN ON HOW YOU JOINED STYX?
"In 1997 I opened for Styx at the Molson Centre in Montreal, Canada. I'd already had a lot of success as a solo artist by then, so fans were singing along during my set. The band took notice. The following year I played in England at a Princess Diana memorial concert with the BBC National Orchestra. Todd Sucherman, who was already Styx's drummer by then, was on the bill playing in another band. That meant I was on his radar for a second time. And when there was the fallout that led to Dennis DeYoung leaving in 1999 Todd put my name forward. I met up with Tommy Shaw and JY. We tried some vocal harmonies and they sounded right. So I was in."

WERE YOU ALREADY A STYX FAN?
"I'm a big progressive music fan, so all the bands I grew up with were British. But Styx was the first prog band from outside the UK that registered with me, probably because they were so successful. And I did become a fan..."

WAS REPLACING AN ESTABLISHED SINGER WITH A SIGNATURE VOICE LIKE DENNIS DEYOUNG DIFFICULT?
"Not really. The band made it clear that they wanted me to sing and play my way. They encouraged me to do what I thought was right and there was never any pressure to sound like Dennis."

DID THE FANS ACCEPT YOU STRAIGHT AWAY?
"My first Styx show was in Branson, Missouri, in 1999. We started the set with 'Blue Collar Man', and I knew that as soon as I started to sing the crowd would let me know if it was working or not. We got to the end of the song and everyone was up and dancing. That's when I knew the Styx audience would be OK with me."

YOU'VE BEEN IN THE BAND MORE THAN TWO DECADES NOW. IS IT AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP?
"When I'm onstage or in the studio with the band it does feel like we're all equal. Like with any band, though, there are certain members you defer to because of their seniority. So Tommy, JY, and Chuck are the ones who know how the band should move ahead. But all six of us lift the same weight when it comes to performing the music."

HAS STYX MUSIC CHANGED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS?
"When I first joined the band wanted to concentrate on playing live. The music business had changed so much that there seemed no point recording a new album. Now things have shifted again and new music is seen as worthwhile. We're also lucky to have a producer like Will Evankovich. He'll spend a lot of time going through stuff we record when we're on the road and that ensures quality."

DO YOU AGREE THAT 'CRASH OF THE CROWN' IS A RETURN TO STYX'S MORE PROGRESSIVE ROOTS?
"That's definitely true. My natural affinity is toward the band's progressive side. On this album we've stretched out a lot more and taken musical risks, which I love. But the pop/rock sensibility is still very much there."

THIS CURRENT STYX LINE-UP HAS LASTED LONGER THAN ANY OTHER. BUT ALL THE SAME, DO YOU FEEL OVERSHADOWED BY THE SUCCESS THE BAND HAD IN THE '70S AND '80S?
"We're not overshadowed by history and we still want to take things forward, but each member feels a responsibility to uphold the legacy of Styx. Everyone who's ever been part of the band has played a crucial role in what's been achieved. Of course there are periods and albums in the history of any band that define them. But to be part of that is a privilege."

IS THERE ONE STYX SONG YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED LIVE THAT YOU'D LOVE TO PERFORM?
"For a long time I was desperate to play 'Mademoiselle' [from 1976's 'Crystal Ball' album]. And I always wanted to do 'Pieces Of Eight', too. Neither was in our live set for ages, but now I've done both of them. So now I can honestly say that the songs I'm most keen to do onstage are the ones from 'Crash Of The Crown'. I've now done everything else that I love in the Styx catalogue."

Interview by Malcolm Dome. Photo: Jason Powell

RICKY PHILLIPS

STYX FINALLY RETURNED TO THE ROAD AT THE START OF THE SUMMER. HOW DID THAT FEEL?
"This is what we love doing and these are my guys. After 16 months I couldn't wait to get back."

DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE'RE STILL DEALING WITH THE FALLOUT OF THE PANDEMIC?
"Yeah, I get that, and my other half is a nurse so she reminds me of those protocols on a daily basis. She gave me a package full of face masks, and for the time being the band doesn't have guests backstage, so we're trying to do the right thing."

DOES IT EVEN SEEM POSSIBLE THAT YOU'VE SPENT 18 YEARS IN STYX?
"Not at all. I've known the guys since I was in The Babys when we opened up for Styx back in 1979. Tommy Shaw and I remained friends. Then when he was in Damn Yankees and I was in Bad English we stayed in touch, and one day he called to ask if I'd put my dancing shoes back on. At the time I had a studio in Los Angeles and had reached the conclusion that rock'n'roll wasn't in vogue anymore. It was a dinosaur game. Or so I thought!"

WERE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT TAKING CHUCK PANOZZO'S PLACE? IT'S TOUGH TO REPLACE A POPULAR MEMBER OF ANY BAND, LET ALONE A CO-FOUNDER WHOSE HEALTH IS IN DOUBT.
"Chuck's tribulations are no secret, but I'm not smart enough to become rattled. For me the hardest part was learning the set; that's a lot of songs and so many vocal harmony parts. It was a bit daunting, but I got through it."

IN THE LATEST BAND BIOGRAPHY YOU SAY, "NO BAND I'VE EVER BEEN IN IS AS GOOD AS STYX AT PLAYING TOGETHER." GIVEN THAT YOUR CV ALSO INCLUDES WORKING WITH RONNIE MONTROSE AND JIMMY PAGE THAT'S A BIG STATEMENT.
"It's true. The guys know who they are and that's a huge deal. A lot of bands get success with their songs. Then they never sound like it again and that's when they fall off the charts. Styx have always loved strong melodies, but they also like prog and hard rock, and they rarely stray from those areas. As a guy whose heroes are Paul McCartney, John Entwistle, and Chris Squire that makes Styx the perfect place for me to be."

DID YOU EVER SEE STYX LIVE WITH LAWRENCE IN THE BAND BEFORE YOU JOINED?
"My friends in Foreigner invited me to see them at the Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles one time when Styx were also on the bill. When I got there Styx were already onstage. I looked up and saw Lawrence for the first time, and I froze. Where did they find *this* guy? He went into a brilliant keyboard solo and his stage presence was as over the top as theirs. For me, working with Lawrence and the rest of the band has been a revelation."

WITH THE LAST TWO RECORDS, 'THE MISSION' AND 'CRASH OF THE CROWN', THE BAND HAS NOTICEABLY UPPED ITS GAME. ANY THEORIES WHY?
"It's because we've been willing to take more chances. It's not just about radio singles and I'm proud of that. It's been so much fun to take things outside the box and just be the most progressive bass player I can be."

IN THE BAND'S BIOG TOMMY SHAW MENTIONS "THAT RICKY PHILLIPS THING" YOU BRING TO SONGS SUCH AS 'LONG LIVE THE KING'. WHAT DOES HE MEAN?
"He's talking about the bridge in that particular song. At times during this record they had to chain me down because I'd gone so prog. For 'Long Live The King' I'd written a lovely melody that went underneath the verse. I was worried that they'd want me to simplify it, though, so I'm real happy that Tommy loved what I did."

CHUCK PANOZZO PLAYS BASS ON THE NEW SONGS 'OUR WONDERFUL LIVES' AND 'LOST AT SEA'. HOW DO YOU WORK OUT WHO'S BEST FOR EACH TRACK?
"It's a no-brainer. I could do something special with those songs, but Chuck could do something even more special. It took less than 30 seconds to decide. And by the way, I must tell you that Chuck is healthier than ever now. He's gone through hell and back, but he's like a new man. He's on the road with us a lot. His energy levels have soared. He's funnier than ever and is a joy to be around. That's why he has such a legion of fans. When he comes out onstage there's just this *roar* from the crowd."

Interview by Dave Ling. Photo: Jason Powell

TODD SUCHERMAN

WERE YOU A STYX FAN BEFORE JOINING THE BAND BACK IN 1995?
"Oh yeah. Growing up in Chicago Styx were hometown favourites! My older brother had the 45 of 'Lady', but it wasn't until 'The Grand Illusion' came out [in 1977] that I was on board. I saw them live in 1981 and 1983 and was in bands that covered Styx material in my youth. Going from that to being in the band for sessions – and then for a summer tour that would last for 26 years – is still pretty incredible."

SO HOW DID YOU GET THE GIG?
"I was a session musician and they were looking to re-record 'Lady' for the 'Greatest Hits' album in 1995. John Panozzo was ill and couldn't play drums, so a mutual acquaintance called Keith Marks recommended me. I did the session in the March and was in and out of there in 90 minutes. In February of '96 the band called me back to play on 'Little Suzie', which was one of the new songs that appeared on 'Greatest Hits Part 2'. The difference that time was that I could tell the rest of the guys were sizing me up as a person, not just a session drummer. I thought something might be brewing there and sure enough, my hunch was correct!"

YOU JOINED THE BAND PERMANENTLY AFTER JOHN PANOZZO SADLY DIED IN JULY OF '96. HOW DID YOU ANALYSE HIS PLAYING?
"John was a very interesting drummer because he was very active, but with limited technique. I don't mean any disrespect by saying that. What I mean is that John was almost one step toward Keith Moon territory. He played with a lot of unorthodox, surprising ideas. So when I got the gig it was a fun template for me to look at the music. There was a lot of room to update things, while still retaining the flavour of the originals. What was perhaps more tricky for me was John's personality. I never met John, but everyone I've spoken with said he was the funniest person they ever knew. He had a huge personality. It made me imagine how Kenney Jones must have felt when he replaced Keith Moon in The Who. Plus I was playing with Chuck Panozzo on bass, and he was used to looking over at his brother. That added some extra gravitas for sure."

WHAT'S THE STYX NUMBER THAT YOU MOST LIKE TO PLAY LIVE?
"'Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)'. It's just a fantastic song. There's more going on with it than meets the ear. It's a challenging and positive piece of music and I connect with it on a very deep level."

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ALBUM THAT YOU'VE RECORDED WITH STYX?
"Each of the albums has a special place in my heart, but I'd have to say my favourite right now is the new one, 'Crash Of The Crown'. I'd heard most of it being written when we were last on the road, and as the songs accumulated I could see this really cool and cohesive record coming together.

"The guys already had a pretty good idea as to what the basic drum parts would be, so it was up to me to take the music, put it under the microscope, and think about how to put my own stamp on things – not only to make it better for me, but to make it better for the music as a whole.

"I was supposed to go to Nashville in April last year to record the drums, but that was put on hold because of COVID, like so many things. Finally technology saved the day and I was able to record in my home studio with my long-time engineer JR Taylor. He'd come across Audiomovers Listento plugin technology that enabled him to work my studio gear remotely from any location. So he recorded me from *his* home, and Tommy Shaw and [album producer] Will Evankovich could listen in on hi-resolution audio from *their* homes. In effect it was like we were all in the room together. And it worked seamlessly. There were no issues at all. I recorded 17 tracks in three days. I was very prepared!"

AS A LONG-TIME MEMBER NOW, WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT BEING IN STYX?
"From a drummer's perspective playing with this band is hard to describe, but it's something you feel when you're in the middle of it. It's different from anything else I've ever been involved in, and I think we can keep going for as long as we want to and for as long as our audience wants to hear us. I want to play until I no longer draw breath!"

Interview by Dave Reynolds. Photo: Jason Powell

INSIDE STORY

MAGNETIC PULL

Dave Wyndorf has been a musician for over 45 years and has fronted his psychedelic/garage/hard rock band **Monster Magnet** for more than three decades. He led them to mainstream success along the way, while always staying true to his musical muse. *Howard Johnson* talks to the vocalist and guitarist about his long, strange trip...

MONSTER MAGNET IS A band that wasn't exactly purpose built for mainstream success. When you announce yourself to the world with two demo cassettes bearing the titles 'Forget About Life, I'm High On Dope' and 'I'm Stoned, What Ya Gonna Do About It?', it's safe to say that sitting at the top of the *Billboard* Hot 100 isn't high on your list of priorities. But don't be fooled into thinking that bandleader Dave Wyndorf is nothing but a slacker who somehow stumbled into a career in rock. Way before those 1989 demos the native of Red Bank, New Jersey had paid some heavy dues pinballing around the New York punk scene of the late '70s and early '80s, trying to catch a break and never quite managing it. And while those heavily drug-centric, yet clearly unforgettable song titles may have been created only to please himself and to put up a big middle finger to the straight world, there was one particular moment that convinced Wyndorf that such titles might just offer him a route to a different kind of market.

"When we recorded those demos we didn't even have a proper band name," Wyndorf confesses with a laugh when we speak. "I'd send tapes to various record companies and if the tape got rejected then I'd just send it again with a different band name and tape cover. So for a while there we were called Nippletank, This Is The Mongoose, Wrath Of The Bull God, King Fuzz, Acid Reich...

"We didn't get any record company interest, but amazingly we did get a gig opening for Jane's Addiction in a concert hall called City Gardens. It was an infamously sh*tty place on the border of Trenton, New Jersey, and Philadelphia – a no man's land of skinheads. We didn't deserve the gig, but somehow we got it. So on the way down to the show we said to each other, 'Well, what should we call ourselves tonight?' My girlfriend at the time happened to be talking about a toy we all loved when we were kids called The Monster Magnet. Straight away I went, 'That's it! *That's* the name.'

"We did just three songs. One of them was a 10-minute cover of Grand Funk Railroad's 'Paranoid' where we just did one part of the song over and over and over again. But for some reason we went over really well. The crowd thought it was art. It was actually just noise, but they thought we'd done it on purpose. We were *trying* to be good, but we sucked. Yet when we walked off stage people were cheering. I couldn't believe it. And then this old hippie sound guy who was in his sixties came up to me. He had his thumbs in the air and he was like, 'All *right*! The return of drug rock!' And straight away it clicked in my mind. I thought, 'OK. With the demo titles and this reaction there's something going on here.' I decided there and then that drug rock was going to be our thing. I decided I was going to get careerist with Monster Magnet, but in the independent music industry where the stakes weren't as high. At that time the indie scene was starting to happen. It seemed like this little fourth dimension had opened up where you could have maybe not a career with lots of money, but a damn good time where your music would be heard by like-minded people. It seemed possible."

BUT THE journey that Dave took to get to this eureka moment in his musical thinking was a long and winding road. Born in 1956 in Red Bank, Wyndorf laughs when he tells me that he's the second-most-famous musician to hail from that town *after* jazz maestro Count Basie. "He built a house right down the street from mine, and Red Bank gives way more props to Count Basie than it does to Monster Magnet!"

Dave describes his childhood as "classic tree-lined streets, little houses with wooden porches, kids on bicycles, fishing down at the hole." With his regulation crew cut it was all safe and all normal – at least until the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 that flared up just as Wyndorf was turning six.

"That whole thing scared me," he admits. "We used to have nuclear fallout drills in school." Fortunately for Dave there was always the radio to offer an escape route from those frightening realities of life. ►

Photo: Getty Images/Niels van Iperen

INSIDE STORY

"I grew up concurrent with some immense musical changes. By the time I was 11 it was 1968. The Beatles had happened and the whole world had changed. My older brother had 'Revolver' and 'Rubber Soul' and they blew my mind. I was too young to be part of the counterculture, but I was young enough to look at everything completely fairly. My mind was starting to open up. I was a sponge and I took everything in. I was curious about it all. In the blink of an eye we'd gone from music on the radio like Sam The Sham And The Pharaohs, novelty stuff, to proto psychedelia like 'Incense And Peppermints' by Strawberry Alarm Clock. And then next we're getting Blue Cheer and Jimi Hendrix. Guys started to appear looking really different, with long hair, and I was totally, totally hooked."

"GROWING UP IN THE '60S AND '70S I GENUINELY BELIEVE I LIVED THROUGH A TRUE MUSICAL RENAISSANCE PERIOD THE LIKE OF WHICH ONLY HAPPENS EVERY COUPLE OF CENTURIES. IF YOU LISTEN TO THE RADIO TODAY MUSIC HAS HARDLY CHANGED OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS. WHEN I WAS A KID IT CHANGED EVERY TWO WEEKS."

Dave admits that despite his parents being pretty cool, his father "got a little upset" when he saw his little boy going down this particular rabbit hole. "He thought the whole country had gone berserk. It looked like every kid in the world had said 'F*ck you' to their parents, had grown their hair and was taking LSD." Which naturally leads to the question of whether young Dave was already dabbling in drugs.

"I'd discovered the *idea* of drugs, but I hadn't taken drugs by that point. I was too young. Drugs were in the public consciousness, and they were wrongly depicted in really goofy ways on TV. So I would watch shows like *Dragnet* and they'd have this big LSD scare thing going on. 'Oh my God! There's LSD! You're gonna try to fly out of the window!' They got it all wrong, of course, but the whole idea seemed *fantastic* to me. I was like, 'Someday I'm gonna take all those f*cking drugs, man.' So when I finally got to the drugs I'd already totally digested psychedelic music. The two things didn't come together. I had the music first and the drugs after."

WYNDORF'S MOVE from *consuming* music to *making* music didn't happen immediately either. "I still had a long way to go," he recognises. "In my mind the people who made this music were wizards. I was a happy consumer of their wizardry, but there was no place for me there. At that time I never had one moment where I thought / could do it. I fantasised about making music the same way I fantasised about being an army man, or fighting a giant mythical beast. I never seriously considered doing it until I was around 19."

Which was when Wyndorf met a bunch of local musos who were in a covers band doing stuff by Hendrix and Cream, and playing high school dances. Dave had albums these guys had never heard of, stuff by Atomic Rooster and Dust. He did a paper round before his day at school, then worked at a car wash after it, and spent all the cash he earned on vinyl. The guys struck up a firm friendship, smoking plenty of weed (the drug moment had finally arrived) and listening to lots and lots of music. The band – featuring both Daniel Rey, who would go on to produce The Ramones, and guitarist Phil Caivano, who would end up with Dave in Monster Magnet – started incorporating some of these obscure songs into their set and before long, sometime in 1975, Dave was co-opted into the group as the singer.

"We called the band Hard Attack, in honour of the second Dust album, and it was pretty interesting," laughs Dave. "We did UFO covers, but not just the Michael Schenker period. We also did 'The Coming Of Prince Kajuku' from that early psychedelic era with Mick Bolton on guitar. We must have been the only band in the world to cover that song!"

Hard Attack's choices of tunes were eclectic all right, ranging from The Stooges to The Modern Lovers and all points in-between. They were based in Red Bank, and mortifying everyone who saw them at local high school dances. The band members were "quickly coming to the conclusion that we should be in New York."

Scouting expeditions to the big city coughed up intel about a cool club called CBGBs. The information came

The Monster Magnet line-up that recorded the 1998 hit album 'Powertrip'. L-R: Ed Mundell (lead guitar), Joe Calandra (bass), Dave Wyndorf (vocals and guitar), Jon Kleiman (drums), Phil Caivano (guitar)

direct from Dictators frontman Handsome Dick Manitoba, whom Dave had met while the singer was handing out flyers for his band's gig in front of Madison Square Gardens.

"They were playing the Beacon Theater at a 'Miss All-Bare America' contest. It was like Miss America except everyone competing was naked. Very late-'70s New York."

Dave highly doubted that CBGBs would let the members of Hard Attack in given that they were all teenagers, but Manitoba assured them they'd be OK. "And we did get in. And that's where the whole punk rock thing happened for us, and we went that way for a while."

Hard Attack started playing CBGBs watched by late-'70s New York punk royalty like the Dead Boys, the Ramones, Blondie, and Suicide. But they weren't the only scenesters who saw the band there.

"At one show there was this weird contingent of rock people sitting at a table watching us," remembers Dave. "They didn't look like the usual punk rockers, and when we finished our show somebody said one of them was Gene Simmons from Kiss, and that he wanted to see me."

In his usual shy and retiring way Simmons was quick to give advice to the fledgling group.

"He was sitting there at one in the morning with dark glasses on," laughs Wyndorf. "And he sounded like a used-car salesman when he spoke to me. He said, 'Let me tell you something kid. There's a band that everybody knows. They're called Led Zeppelin, but you call them Zeppelin, right? Does anybody really call them Led Zeppelin? No, they call them Zeppelin. Then there's another band called the Rolling Stones, but they're commonly known as the Stones. So this is my advice. You can pick the word 'hard'. You could pick the word 'attack'. But just pick one word for your band name. That's the secret.' So we changed the band name to Shrapnel."

That wasn't all the band did, though. Legs McNeil, editor of the emerging magazine *Punk*, took Shrapnel on for management and together with the band started developing a whole new concept to back up the music.

"We were young kids, but Legs had this insane idea that we should look like US soldiers touting this kind of pro-America agenda. We'd lost the war in Vietnam and at the same time America had lost its rock'n'roll way. Things had got all hippy dippy. Now we should take it back with some sort of aggressive punk rock action." I tell Wyndorf this sounds ludicrous.

"Well I never really understood if Legs was serious or not. *I* didn't take it seriously, but he *might* have."

> "THIS OLD HIPPIE SOUND GUY WHO WAS IN HIS SIXTIES CAME UP TO ME. HE HAD HIS THUMBS IN THE AIR AND HE WAS LIKE, 'ALL *RIGHT*! THE RETURN OF DRUG ROCK!' AND STRAIGHT AWAY IT CLICKED IN MY MIND. I DECIDED THERE AND THEN THAT DRUG ROCK WAS GOING TO BE OUR THING."

The band went out and bought cheap army-surplus uniforms, put on helmets, and toted plastic guns.

"We basically started playing army, like some goofy recreation of an American comic book, *Sgt. Fury And His Howling Commandos*. But I was a big Alice Cooper fan, so I had no problem getting into character."

IT WAS 1978, and punk was erupting, but Dave says he didn't feel any need to compete with the Sex Pistols.

"We just did our Shrapnel thing for as long as we could, travelling around in a van out to the Midwest, sometimes to the south, up to Canada. We did a lot of gigs, which taught me how to sing. But people didn't get it. Mind you, it was a half-assed concept to begin with, this anti-hippy thing, saying we didn't do drugs and just drank beer, which was *not* true. I mean, come on. I was going to see Hawkwind!"

Despite Shrapnel failing to pull up any trees, Wyndorf was having the time of his life.

"It's the age-old story," he laughs. "I was this shy kid from a tiny little town who'd never been to the big city. All of a sudden there's beer, there's rock, there's girls. I couldn't imagine doing anything else because it was such fun – and because I didn't know *how* to do anything else."

The singer was true to his word, because Shrapnel lasted "eight long years. It lasted way longer than it should have, but because we could all go back to Red Bank and stay with our parents when things weren't

Photos: Gonzales Photo/Per-Otto Oppi; Getty Images/Martyn Goodacre

INSIDE STORY

going well we could sort of limp along."

Perhaps against the odds Shrapnel finally managed to land a major label deal and in 1984 released a five-track mini-album on Elektra Records.

"But it was awful. We'd ditched the uniforms by then, but we'd also shot our load. We probably went on about four years too long."

Dave had another half-hearted go with a band called Crash And Burn for maybe 18 months "wearing a cut-off leather vest and a scarf. But I wasn't comfortable with the whole thing. It didn't work out, so I just went and started working day jobs. I figured that music was over for me."

Dave reveals that he was a landscape gardener "for the longest time. It was great. You just pound coffee and doughnuts all day and still wind up looking like Hercules because the work's so goddamn hard. It was a whole different life. I quit drinking and was waking up at the time I used to go to sleep. I wasn't unhappy, but I *was* unhappy with the music that was coming out of the radio at that point. I started listening to a lot of obscure '60s garage rock on these amazing compilations called 'Back From The Grave' and 'Pebbles', and that stuff started turning me on like crazy."

WYNDORF SAYS he would have been perfectly happy to carry on in his own musical man-cave of obscurities had it not been for the fact that he eventually started hearing things on the radio that *did* excite him once more.

"The Brits really started coming through again," he says. "I heard early Cult, Bauhaus, New Order, and all of a sudden everything started making sense to me again. I thought to myself, 'Things might be getting better if only I just ignore all this hair metal that's out there.' I really wasn't paying much attention to it. I had the punk ethic and that wouldn't go away. It meant you weren't allowed to be *stupid*, and that kind of spoiled hair metal for me. If it hadn't been for that I could have joined f*cking Bon Jovi or something! I mean, those guys had long hair, but that stuff was for girls. You just *knew* it."

What Dave decided to do instead of join Bon Jovi was finally learn to play guitar.

"In the end I'd had it with landscaping and went to work in a comic book store in Red Bank called Fantasy Zone, which was often mistaken for an adult pleasure palace. I sat on a stool with a guitar waiting for customers, playing first one string, then two, then three, trying to form chords. I thought that if I could play a garage rock song then that would be enough for me to think about writing a tune of my own.

"I bought a Tascam four-track recorder, which was new at the time, and realised that even though my talent as a guitar player was limited, I could still make songs by multi-tracking and singing.

"I started a 'project', though it was pretty much all in my head, called Love Monster. It was inspired by all that garage stuff, old '70s rock like Alice Cooper and the new English music that was getting better every day. I was getting into bands like Spacemen 3, Loop, and My Bloody Valentine. Plus there was also stuff coming out of the Seattle area like Soundgarden, Screaming Trees, and Mudhoney. I remember saying to myself, 'If ever there's a time to be in another rock band that's not stupid, it's now.' It was 1989."

WYNDORF MANAGED to put his plan into action with the help of two other Red Bank musicians, bassist and guitarist John McBain, and drummer and vocalist Tim Cronin. They both worked in record stores and would pop over to the comic emporium at lunchtime to see Dave and "drink coffee and talk about rock."

"John and Tim had a little project of their own and they were recording these really cool tapes under the name Dog Of Mystery. It was pretty out-there, in the style of maybe Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa, with some very esoteric moments. I'd call it DIY intellectualism – and I just loved it."

Dave joined John and Tim in Dog Of Mystery for a

couple of local gigs, but he found it hard to get a handle on music that offered so little in terms of song structure.

"So I suggested we take a look at some of my songs, which were actually *songs*. I brought in 'Spine Of God' and a couple of other things that ended up being used in Monster Magnet. I was really comfortable with what we were doing because I really loved the music. More than I'd ever loved music, actually."

The band released a single, 'Lizard Johnny'/'Freakshop USA', on a Long Island label called Circuit Records before adding drummer Jon Kleiman and bassist Joe Calandra.

"I was always trying to keep things very tongue-in-cheek the whole time," says Dave. "I tried to ram in all of the stuff that I liked; drug culture, psychedelic music, punk rock, hard rock, Russ Meyer movies, sci-fi films... It was a lot of fun."

Dave (right) with mega producer Rick Rubin. "Can't you get Rick to produce my album?"

"THE KIDS WERE REACTING TO HIP-HOP, BECAUSE IT HAD AN EASY BEAT AND BECAUSE THOSE GUYS DRESSED UP REAL FANCY AND LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE BADASSES. I FIGURED THERE WAS NO REASON WHY A BUNCH OF KIDS FROM NEW JERSEY COULDN'T DO THE SAME THING WITH THE RIGHT KIND OF MUSIC FOR US. I DYED MY HAIR BLACK AND GOT THE LEATHER AND THAT WAS THE NEW MISSION."

Bizarrely it was a German label, Glitterhouse, that picked the band up for more recordings.

"I met this guy at a gig we played with Mudhoney," recalls Wyndorf. "He walked up to me and said, 'Hi, I'm Reinhardt. I'm from Germany and I want you to record for my label. I will pay you nothing to make a record.' It turned out to be the right thing to do, though, because it put us on the map."

The band released a six-track EP, 'Monster Magnet', in 1990 with a line-up of Wyndorf on guitar and vocals, McBain on guitar, Cronin on bass, and Tom Diello on drums. But it was debut album 'Spine Of God', released in 1991 on Glitterhouse, that really brought the band to mainstream attention. Recorded with yet another different line-up of Wyndorf, McBain, Joe Calandra on bass, Jon Kleiman on drums, and Tim Cronin mysteriously credited as 'Dope/Lights/Center of The Universe', the album was hailed as one of the earliest examples of what would soon become known as Stoner Rock.

"It got all kinds of press and the Caroline label wanted to put it out in America. Before we knew it 'Spine Of God' turned up in *Spin* magazine – which was a big deal at the time – as one of the 10 best albums of the year you didn't hear. You worked in the printed press back then, Howard. You know that it was a big deal.

"So I had this feeling that no matter what I did with Monster Magnet, it would definitely put me in a place that was more fun than working at the comic store for the rest of my life. It was exciting and it was interesting and everything was new to me. I had my fingers crossed about the money side of things, but I knew I didn't have to make much for it to work for me. The only thing that made things properly sticky was the fact that by this time I was in my 30s, I was married, and there was a pregnancy. It's the one part of the whole thing I regret. I fell in love with the child, of course I did. But I forged ahead and then eventually we got divorced. It was wild drama."

MONSTER MAGNET played 36 shows in Europe. At first there were 50 odd people watching. By the end it was more like 500. Soundgarden appeared on MTV wearing Monster Magnet shirts and then offered Wyndorf's mob the opening slot on their US tour in support of new album 'Badmotorfinger'.

"I was like, 'Holy sh*t. We *have* to do this.' My view at that time was that we had to say yes to everything, whether we had money to do it or not. I maxed out my credit card!"

Wyndorf's work ethic was clearly helped by the fact that he wasn't drinking or doing drugs.

"I'd quit drinking when Shrapnel ended and had quit drugs even before that. In the early years of Monster Magnet I was completely straight. There was maybe the odd beer once in a while, but honestly, I'd lost my taste for all that stuff. I was like Mephistopheles, laughing at the irony of the fact that this whole drug rock thing was being made by a guy who didn't do drugs. I always thought everyone would see that it was all tongue-in-cheek. And if people didn't get it, well I wasn't going to *explain* it. I never said I did drugs. I just implied it. I showed up with sunglasses on and went 'Hey baby!' And everyone went, 'Oh my God. He's a madman!'" In the interest of transparency, it should be noted that Wyndorf did later develop a problem with prescription drugs and overdosed in 2006. He has now thankfully recovered.

Monster Magnet's performances on the Soundgarden tour led to the band signing to A&M, the same major label as the Seattle band.

"We had nine majors interested," recalls Wyndorf. "But A&M seemed like they were the ones most likely to lay off as far as trying to influence me commercially."

This *laissez faire* attitude even led the label to suggest to Wyndorf that he might want to produce his major label debut album himself.

"And even I was like, 'I don't know if that's such a good idea. I've never done this before. Can't you get Rick Rubin?' A&M were surprisingly deferential to me the whole time. They always had a belief that I knew what I was doing way more than I really did. I'd played myself as the mystery man with the sunglasses, the guy who produced all his own records and knew exactly what he was doing. But the fact was that I'd never produced anything more than an eight track. I just kept betting

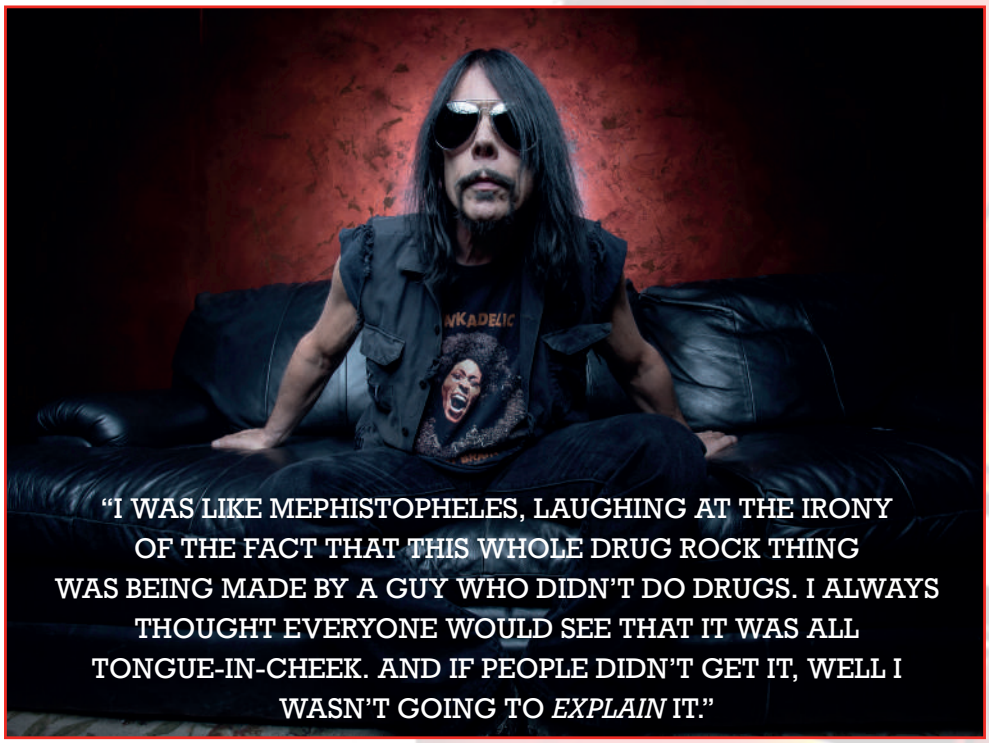
Photos: Getty Images/Ethan Miller; Getty Images/Theo Wargo

INSIDE STORY

and betting on the myth getting me through. I thought maybe I could learn enough between album number one and album number two on A&M to get to album number three."

So Wyndorf did produce 1993's 'Superjudge' and 1995's 'Dopes To Infinity', with Ed Mundell replacing John McBain on guitar. But neither album set the world on fire.

"I had a six-album contract, but I always knew that no matter what these people said, album number three would be crucial. I told my manager, 'If that record isn't some sort of huge success, then everything is going to be different.' Which was OK, so long as I had some place to land where I could continue doing what I was doing. I never wanted to compromise. What if I sold out creatively and then it didn't work? It would be awful. I think I would just curl up and die."



"I WAS LIKE MEPHISTOPHELES, LAUGHING AT THE IRONY OF THE FACT THAT THIS WHOLE DRUG ROCK THING WAS BEING MADE BY A GUY WHO DIDN'T DO DRUGS. I ALWAYS THOUGHT EVERYONE WOULD SEE THAT IT WAS ALL TONGUE-IN-CHEEK. AND IF PEOPLE DIDN'T GET IT, WELL I WASN'T GOING TO *EXPLAIN* IT."

The way that Wyndorf got himself out of this particular third album bind is really interesting.

"I'd visited a lot of the places I'd wanted to go to musically by this point," he explains. "I'd done psychedelic rock and garage rock and had even explored more mellow stuff on 'Dopes To Infinity'. I really didn't want to repeat myself. 'Just do 'Spine Of God II'.' Well that's not gonna happen. So when I was thinking about the third A&M album in 1997 I was looking at MTV – and asking where all the rock bands were. Hair metal had spoiled everybody's taste for it, so by this point it was wall-to-wall hip-hop videos. I was like '*These* guys own rock now.'

So I got this idea to do a full-on rock thing, but something that had the aesthetics of the time. I wasn't sure if the band members could go with it, because they weren't *over-personalitied*. But I said to my A&R guy, 'I'm going to write a f*ckin' album called 'Powertrip' and it's just going to be f*ckin' leather and sunglasses and Stooges and surf and money and t*ts and all the sh*t.' I said, 'I'm just gonna play this circus, where it's all about money and all they give a sh*t about is image.' The kids were reacting to hip-hop, because it had an easy beat and because those guys dressed up real fancy and looked like they were badasses. I figured there was no reason why a bunch of kids from New Jersey couldn't do the same thing with the right kind of music for us. The band were like, 'What the f*ck?' But I just went full on. I dyed my hair black and got the leather and that was the new mission."

WYNDORF CONVINCED his A&R man that the project was going to work, then even more impressively also convinced him to cough up the cash for Dave to go to Las Vegas for three weeks to catch the vibes he needed for this new, superannuated Monster Magnet. "I was thinking like Hunter S. Thompson," he says.

With just two songs under his belt at the time he arrived there, Wyndorf had written the whole of 'Powertrip' by the time three weeks were up.

"I'd seen some of those second wave, wimpy grunge bands selling two million records," he says. "I was screaming at my product manager, 'They can sell two million of that and *you* can't sell millions of copies of Monster Magnet!'"

'Powertrip' – produced by Wyndorf and the much-respected Matt Hyde – was released on 16 June 1998 and despite Wyndorf's bravura, deep down he wasn't really so sure that this was a nailed-on hit.

"I thought it might well be our last hurrah," he admits. "I thought maybe some people would get it, but the old fans would peel away. I hoped I'd put the same amount of esoteric stuff in it, but it was definitely a more cut and dried record, angrier and without much echo. And the crazy thing is that it worked way better than I ever thought it would. The fact is that most people still didn't really get it, but what they got out of it was enough to make it a hit record. Not a hit record for all time, but enough of a hit to allow it to rise above the rabble for a short period. I'll always be proud of the fact that we had a hit song called 'Space Lord'. I mean, what the hell?! The words are all about me getting with a dominatrix and it's just really, really, you know... It's not meant for mass consumption.

"What resonated was the overall energy and enthusiasm that was coming out of the music and how it was portrayed visually. We made a hip-hop style video way before Kid Rock. I'd figured that everything in America was like a TV commercial, so I made a TV commercial for the band. You might not call it art, but it fell in line perfectly with my cynical attitude within the record. It was Monster Magnet selling out, but so

obviously not really selling out. Me in a blue suit and girls throwing money around? I thought people might get it – and people kinda did."

'POWERTRIP' WENT gold, and while Dave says that he always has to watch the pennies to this day, "after that record I never did work another day in my life."

For their part A&M were "so happy. 'Powertrip' was a big experiment and it worked. They told me, 'Not only is this record really doing good, but you did it *your* way. Nobody f*cked with you.' But the same year that 'Powertrip' was released, 1998, A&M was sold to Universal, and all the people I worked with all those years were fired. All of a sudden there was no A&M. Suddenly it was just a kiosk in a giant Interscope Records building. A&M was folded into Interscope."

"I'LL ALWAYS BE PROUD OF THE FACT THAT WE HAD A HIT SONG CALLED 'SPACE LORD'. I MEAN, WHAT THE HELL?! THE WORDS ARE ALL ABOUT ME GETTING WITH A DOMINATRIX AND IT'S JUST REALLY, REALLY, YOU KNOW… IT'S NOT MEANT FOR MASS CONSUMPTION."

Wyndorf produced one more Monster Magnet album for A&M, 2001's 'God Says No'. "But the Interscope people had no faith in it whatsoever. They said, 'We don't know what to do with this.' I told them it was pretty easy. All they had to do was promote the band on tour, but they didn't want to spend the money. I thought we were going to be dropped, but it turned out to be worse than that. I ended up running up bills touring a record the label wasn't promoting properly, and the tabs I ran up were directly transferred to recoup against royalties. There was no way out besides getting fired, but they didn't want to fire me. I imagine they thought they'd let the band limp on for a while to pay back the money we owed. And then streaming came along and the record companies f*cked that whole thing up so bad. It just became super obvious to me that it was going to be all downhill from there, and that maybe it was time to go back to the old way."

A&M finally did drop Monster Magnet, helped in their decision by Dave "pretending I was crazy whenever they wanted to talk to me about anything. I knew that I had to start building a semi-independent career or stay with a major label for the worst time ever in history."

And that's exactly what Dave Wyndorf has done these last 20 years, releasing a further six studio albums and steadfastly managing to do his thing his way.

"Staying true to the promise of music, the idea of having an adventure inside your mind when you create stuff, then making it real and representing it to the world. It's a weird job to have, making stuff up and then standing in front of people yelling at them, then leaving to go to another place to do it all over again. But it's fulfilling doing it the way I do it. I write the songs, produce the records, design the covers, physically represent it to people, get to be with the people who enjoy it, sweat with them, live with them, eat with them, have sex with them. That's a life!"

SO HERE we are in 2021, and Dave Wyndorf has taken another interesting little detour on his long, long journey by releasing a covers album of garage rock obscurities that have real emotional resonance for the man singing and playing them.

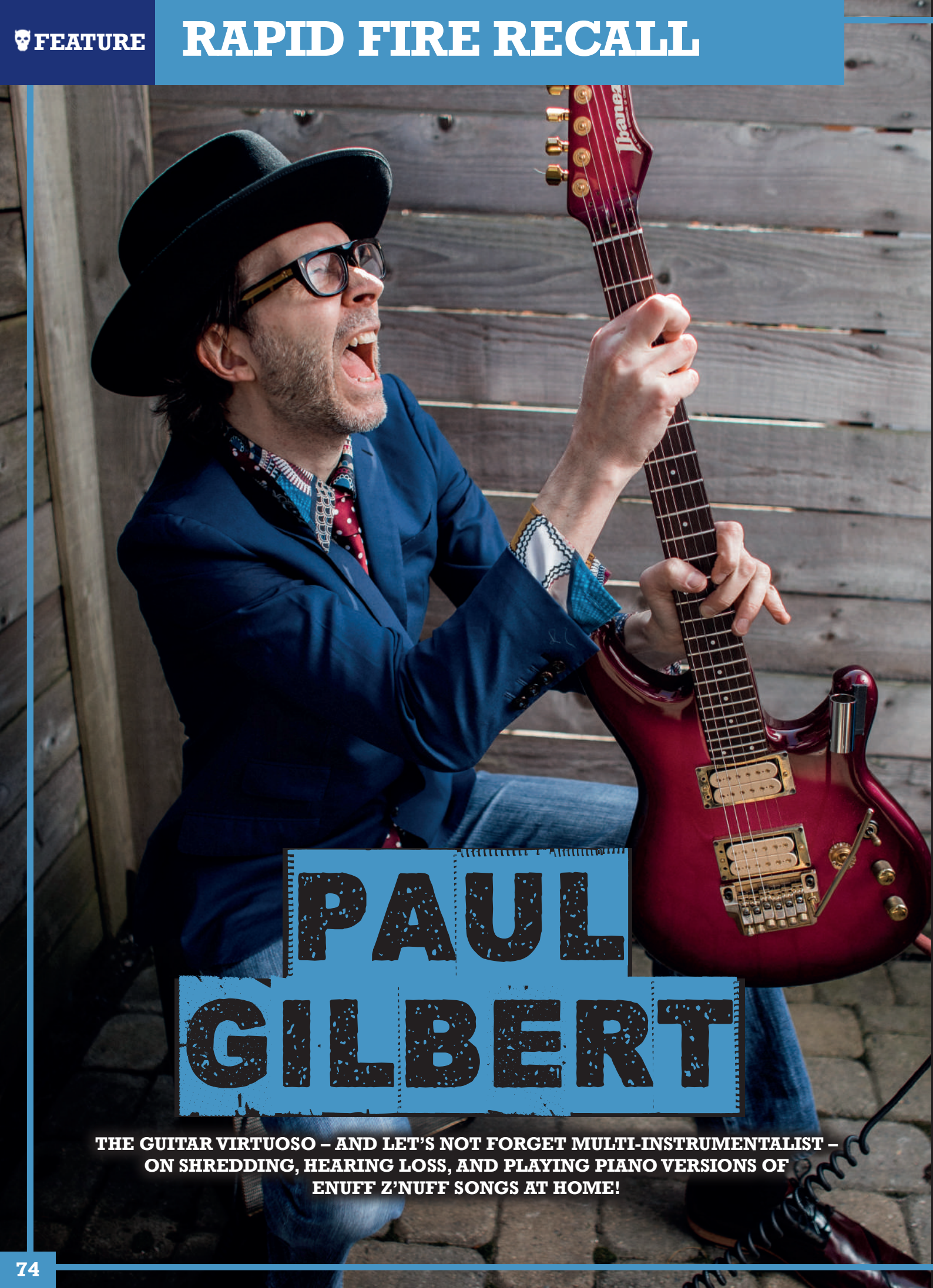
"The songs on 'A Better Dystopia' are me going down a specific rabbit hole that I wanted to share with people. They're the type of songs that inspired Monster Magnet and because we're playing them they can't help but *sound* like Monster Magnet, which is important. I picked songs that are in our wheelhouse, with a lot of the same chord structures I use when I write my own songs. I try to stay true to the Monster Magnet concept, keeping the same tent poles that we've erected. I like to stretch things out, but not too far, because I've been a fan of bands where they go off into their jazz trip and you think, 'Well, they've just f*ckin' *lost* it.'

"I need to keep Monster Magnet fans coming to the shows, because that's how I pay the guys who play with me. But aside from that I don't feel any commercial concerns. I don't worry about radio, because we've got no place on that. And I understand that getting new people to put eyeballs on you is really hard. That's not the culture any more. Mass culture now only uses music as an *adjunct* to people's personalities. Tribalism has gone, and feelings and experiences are now shared constantly through words and typing, through social media. Everybody in the world is talking at the exact same time now and there's precious little time for *listening*, which is bad news for music, especially the kind of music that I do where things are deliberately ambiguous and need a bit of thought. Look at the songs on Tik Tok now. They're shorter than ever. People are doing away with bridges and choruses. The hits are a minute-and-a-half long and they're all verse.

"Don't get me wrong. This isn't just your typical old man talking. I've thought about this, and growing up in the '60s and '70s I genuinely believe that I lived through a true musical renaissance period the like of which only happens every couple of centuries. If you listen to the radio today music has hardly changed over the last 10 years. When I was a kid it changed every two weeks. We went from Sam The Sham And The Pharaohs to 'In The Court Of The Crimson King' in four years. That's insane! That's what I'm representing with 'A Better Dystopia', and pretty much all of the music I've ever made. So nobody should feel bad about me being an old dude. That's just fine by me."

Photos: Jeremy Saffer; Getty Images/Martyn Goodacre

RAPID FIRE RECALL



PAUL GILBERT

THE GUITAR VIRTUOSO – AND LET'S NOT FORGET MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST – ON SHREDDING, HEARING LOSS, AND PLAYING PIANO VERSIONS OF ENUFF Z'NUFF SONGS AT HOME!

ASKING GUITAR GURU MIKE VARNEY FOR A GIG WITH OZZY AGED 15

"When you're a 15-year-old kid living in rural Pennsylvania, and you know that Ozzy needs a guitar player, what else are you going to do? I was already ripping up the fretboard with some authority in my covers band and I was a big fan of Randy Rhoads. I'd seen a magazine article where Mike Varney promised to listen to any cassette he received. I figured that he lived in California, so there might be a chance he could get in touch with Ozzy. I knew that it was very unlikely I'd be considered for the gig, but I also knew that I'd regret it if I didn't at least *try*. So I tried. Mike did listen to my cassette. He liked my guitar playing, but thought my songwriting was terrible. He also thought I was too young to play in Ozzy's band. So I worked on my songwriting."

Paul (second left) with Racer X in 1987

"IT'S NOT A SECRET HOW TO PLAY THE GUITAR. AFTER MAKING 11,000 VIDEO EXCHANGES FOR MY ONLINE SCHOOL I HAVE TO SAY THAT THE INFORMATION IS THERE!"

THE GUITAR INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

"I did well in high school, so my mom took the next logical step and started taking me to universities to decide which one I should attend. I distinctly remember walking through the chemistry lab at [well-respected university] Johns Hopkins in Baltimore and suddenly thinking, 'This could really happen! I'd better figure out how to get out of this. I'm a *musician*!' I remembered that I'd seen an ad for the Guitar Institute Of Technology in a guitar magazine, so I dug that out and showed it to my parents. I'd done nothing but practise guitar since I was nine years old, so they knew I was serious about music. My grandma generously paid the tuition fees. So on 10 September 1984 – I just looked up the date in a diary I kept back then – I flew from Pittsburgh to Los Angeles.

"It was a huge relief to put my time into guitar and music with no distractions. I immediately joined four bands – two in school, two outside of school – practised all the time, and ate lots of cherry pies and cookies. My main goal was to put a band together so I could make a record for Mike Varney's label. I met bassist John Alderete, who was a student at the Bass Institute Of Technology, and drummer Harry Gschoesser, who was at the Percussion Institute Of Technology. John, Harry, and I would meet at the school every morning at 7am so we could grab a rehearsal room before classes started at 10am. Very few students were willing to get up that early so we could always get the best room. The G.I.T. staff had to walk past our rehearsals to get to their offices, so they heard me playing every day. They also knew that I was good at getting up early in the morning. So as soon as I graduated I was asked to work at the school as a teacher. That was great. It paid some rent and also gave me a chance to stay in an inspiring musical environment with many great musicians."

SHREDDING

"Imagine someone with a bow and arrow. Actually, they have *lots* of arrows. Hundreds of arrows! And they can shoot the arrows all over the place. Most go into the sky. One occasionally hits a target, but not intentionally. It just hits the target because there are so many arrows going all over the place in every direction, really, really fast! It's an amazing thing to watch. And then one guy walks up with a single arrow. He aims straight at the target. And with one shot the arrow hits the bullseye. That's pretty cool to watch too. Is one better than the other? Well that's the argument about shred right there. My answer? Not everyone has to play the same way. Play what you want. Listen to what you want. After establishing myself as an 'arrows everywhere' guy I'm happy that I'm finally learning to aim and hit some targets on purpose."

RACER X

"Mike Varney helped us find vocalist Jeff Martin. I loved Jeff's vibrato, his tone, and his writing style. Plus he turned out to be really funny, creative, and a great friend. Harry Gschoesser was in the US on a student visa and it ran out in 1986, so we needed a new drummer. We did a couple of gigs with Todd DeVito, because I'd played with him in a band called Black Sheep [in 1985]. I'd been trying to get Scott Travis to join for a while, but he had a paying gig with Doug Marks's Hawk. He was unsure about Racer X, because we couldn't offer a salary. Finally our music won him over, plus our gigs were starting to draw a lot of people. Bruce Bouillet was a guitar student of mine at G.I.T. and he had this amazing ability to play anything I showed him. We started playing some of our super-fast phrases in harmony and we'd never heard anyone do anything like that before. So I asked Bruce to join and the line-up was complete. We played chess, went bowling, and rehearsed like crazy. Lots of big record companies came to see us and didn't like us. But the shows were amazing. We were an intense

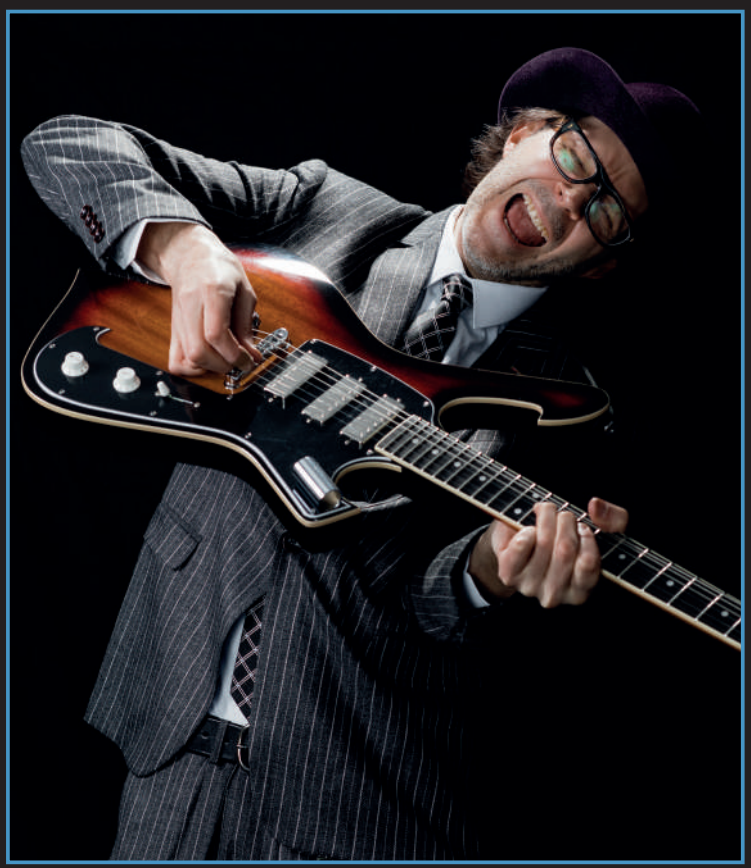
Photos: Jason Quigley; Getty Images/Paul Natkin

RAPID FIRE RECALL

band live and I do regret that we didn't get the chance to tour in those early days."

EARLY INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

"I didn't want to do an instructional video at first. In the late '80s I still had dreams of being a rock star with Racer X and thought I'd be shattering the mystique by sitting down and explaining guitar licks. But the advance was good money, and the idea of not sweating rent every month was too good to pass up. I also made sure I got the freedom to produce the video with my own creative ideas. So I did guitar 'tricks' by pulling a rabbit out of my guitar and other such tomfoolery. I shattered the mystique for sure, but my playing was probably better than what I was doing on records at the time, so that helped me get some attention. I still get students who've been influenced by those early videos and I always want to apologise to them. I really wasn't teaching, more showing off. But you have to start somewhere!"



HEAVY METAL

"I was listening to Iron Maiden's 'Killers' album the other day and, man, it's awesome. I love Judas Priest from that era too. And I'll always love Black Sabbath, Rainbow, Dio, Accept, Loudness, Saxon, and Def Leppard. When I was a teenager it was nearly impossible to find anyone who could sing that stuff. I could find good drummers and bass players. But where do you find someone who can sing like Dio? And then they've got to write lyrics about dragons and hobbits and not sound silly! It's a really tall order. But I haven't thought about it in a while. What if I *did* write some songs about dragons, hobbits, and elves? It might be great!"

MR. BIG

"I was a big fan of [bassist] Billy Sheehan since I'd watched him play with Talas in clubs in Pittsburgh. Billy took a big step up to play with David Lee Roth in 1985, and I was excited when he called me to see if I was interested in forming a band with him in 1988. I was also a fan of Eric Martin's singing. I didn't know [drummer] Pat Torpey, but we got along well from the very first rehearsal. It was hard to leave Racer X. Those guys were my best friends and the music was something special. But we couldn't seem to break through in the business. Eric Martin had Herbie Herbert as a manager. Herbie also looked after Journey and had serious industry influence, so I decided to make the move and join Mr. Big. Our first album [1989's 'Mr. Big'] was much more tame then I'd envisioned, but it still rocked and we went on real tours! We headlined clubs and then joined an arena tour opening for Rush. Our second album, [1991's] 'Lean Into It', had much more melodic songwriting and I was excited to release it and play the songs live. Our acoustic number 'To Be With You' went to number one on the *Billboard* charts and we started headlining big venues in Japan. Grunge trends in the States then put us out of favour with our record company, but we kept having more and more success in Japan and started touring in Indonesia and South America, and then all over the world. The inner turmoil in the band finally got too much for me and I left in 1996. I also wanted to try being a singer, so I recorded a bunch of solo albums. There was a Mr. Big reunion in 2009 and it was a good one. We managed to get along and enjoy not only the music, but also our friendship. I really liked the 'What If...' record we made in 2011 with Kevin Shirley. It was the most 'live in the studio' record we'd ever done, and the songs and grooves were good."

PAT TORPEY

"Man, I miss that guy. It's really odd that he's not here. [Torpey died from complications of Parkinson's disease, aged 64, in 2018.] He's still alive in my memory and in my heart. Pat was always great to play with and he was always my beacon of sanity when things got a little crazy on the road. Pat also loved Mr. Big, and was a driving force in keeping things rolling, even when we were bickering."

RICHIE KOTZEN

"I don't know Richie that well, despite the fact that he replaced me in Mr. Big. But he's always cool when I meet him. We have the same manager, who always says, 'Man, Richie can *sing*!' My manager never says that about me! That's one of the reasons why I've been sticking to guitar lately!"

PLAYING IN TRIBUTE BANDS

"Mike Portnoy is not only a great drummer, but also a great organiser. He did all the work putting together tribute bands for The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Rush, and The Who, and I had a great time playing that music! I'm a Spock's Beard fan, so it was great to play with [vocalist] Neal Morse. I'm also a huge fan of Utopia, so I was really excited to play Beatles songs with Kasim Sulton from that band on bass!"

With Mr. Big (second from right) in 1989

SOLO ALBUMS

"Enuff Z'Nuff supported on the first Mr. Big tour. I heard them play every night and their Beatles-inspired songs rekindled my love of '60s and '70s pop. My poppier songs weren't well received in Mr. Big. Even 'Green-Tinted Sixties Mind' faced quite a bit of resistance when I first played it for the guys, though fortunately that song still made the cut. But some of my other songs were labelled 'too pop'. I felt that stuff was some of my best writing at the time, so I wanted to find a way to get it out there. The ADAT digital recorder had just come out, so pro home recording was suddenly a lot more affordable. So I put a studio together in my house and started organising my first solo album, [1998's] 'King Of Clubs'. Looking back on those early solo albums now, I hear flaws that I didn't notice at the time, mainly in my singing. But it was something that I had to try, like my attempt at an audition with Ozzy. Otherwise I'd always be wondering 'What if?' There were cool moments though. 'Gilberto Concerto' from the 'Flying Dog' album [in 1998] is a JC Bach harpsichord concerto with the entire string section and harpsichord parts played on guitar. That was a real musical mountain to climb and I'm still proud of it. My cover of ELP's 'Karn Evil 9' on [1999's] 'Beehive Live' is pretty amazing, because I played all of Keith Emerson's keyboard parts on guitar. I like 'Raw Blues Power', the album that I recorded with my uncle, Jimi Kidd, in 2002. 'Burning Organ' [also from 2002] and [2005's] 'Space Ship One' both have some songs that I like. 'My Religion' and 'Mr. Spock' in particular turned out good. 'United States', the album I did with vocalist Freddie Nelson in 2009, really turned out well too. I wish more people knew about that record. The song 'The Last Rock And Roll Star' is one of my favourites on it. 'Vibrato' from 2012 and 'I Can Destroy' from 2016 both have rock songs with cantankerous lyrics that I like a lot. 'Enemies (In Jail)' and 'Everybody Use Your Goddamn Turn Signal' both feel like I've finally found my lyrical style. I was always reluctant to make instrumental guitar records, but this path has turned out much better than I expected. The albums 'Silence Followed By A Deafening Roar' [2008], 'Fuzz Universe' [2010] and 'Behold Electric Guitar' [2019] all have music that I like a lot. I also love the song 'Hurry Up' from 2006's 'Get Out Of My Yard.' And of course, my new album, 'Werewolves Of Portland' has songs that I'm proud of."

> "WHERE DO YOU FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN SING LIKE DIO? AND THEN THEY'VE GOT TO WRITE LYRICS ABOUT DRAGONS AND HOBBITS AND NOT SOUND SILLY! IT'S A REALLY TALL ORDER."

BEING A MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST

"Drums are so much fun! There are no wrong notes! I can just play rhythms as they come to me and I don't have to go through all the mental concentration that guitar requires where there are notes to navigate. Bass is the opposite. The notes are really important. My songs are sometimes Beatles-y, so the bass parts are busier than the guitar chords, and that means I have to get the notes right. It's not a technical challenge. It's more of a mental challenge to play through the chord changes in a melodic way. For keyboards I just keep things simple, because I never developed much technique. I know a lot of chords though, so I can emphasise the harmony with a piano overdub. And I love playing piano versions of Enuff Z'Nuff songs when I'm at home. I'll often 'translate' songs back and forth from guitar to piano just for fun." ►

Photos: Jason Quigley; Getty Images/Chris Walter

RAPID FIRE RECALL

"I STILL HEAR BASS FREQUENCIES JUST FINE, BUT TREBLE IS PRETTY MUCH A MEMORY. I FEEL FORTUNATE THAT I CAN STILL HEAR ACCURATE PITCH AND RHYTHM, AND CAN PLAY MUSIC BETTER THAN I EVER HAVE. BUT UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN LANGUAGE IS REALLY CHALLENGING."

ARTISTWORKS ONLINE MUSIC SCHOOL

"My online school has kept me sane through the quarantine, as I've still been able to communicate with my students and to stay busy making Video Exchange lessons for them. I've been teaching at ArtistWorks since 2012, so the school was already set up and working well when the lockdown hit. If anything the school became a lot more popular because other people were stuck at home and needed something to do. I've recorded nearly 11,000 Video Exchange lessons for my students and I love the fact that the online school allows me to listen to them play. I have a much better idea about what to teach when I can hear how a student plays, and also see their hands and guitar position. All those lessons are in the archives, so many of my students just sit back and watch the videos, which is fine too."

"WHEN I RELEASED MY 'ARGUMENT ABOUT PIE' VIDEO, SOMEONE WROTE 'THIS NEW PAUL GILBERT SONG IS THE MOST PAUL GILBERT PAUL GILBERT SONG I'VE HEARD BY PAUL GILBERT.' I'M HOPING TO KEEP GETTING REVIEWS LIKE THAT."

IBANEZ GUITARS

"I've been an Ibanez endorser since 1987 and it's been 100 per cent fantastic. The instruments are great and the people are creative and easy to work with. I just made a video for my song, 'Werewolves Of Portland', where I'm playing, dancing, drumming, and howling with my six-year-old son. We're both wearing wolf costumes as well. I wanted to play my Ibanez double neck in the video and I thought it would be cool to have a smaller version for my son to play. I put all this together at the last minute, so I contacted Ibanez and said, 'Can you make a small double neck for me in two days? The details don't matter, since we're shooting in silhouette. So just chop and glue!' They chopped and glued and sanded and made me the coolest little double neck! It arrived in time for the video – and I love the guitar! Those guys are heroes! And of course I've enjoyed my time with my PGM signature models and my current FRM models, which sound *so* good! I also collect vintage Ibanez guitars which are high quality, but much less expensive than the 'museum piece' guitar brands."

TINNITUS

"I have screaming ringing in my ears (actually in my brain, but it's perceived as sound.) The ringing's been going on for decades, so I've come to terms with it, and it doesn't really bother me. Hearing loss, on the other hand, is much more challenging to deal with. I still hear bass frequencies just fine, but treble is pretty much a memory. I feel fortunate that I can still hear accurate pitch and rhythm, and can play music better than I ever have. But understanding spoken language is really challenging. Treble is where the consonants are, so S, TH, CH, SH, and sounds like that are all guesswork for me. I wear hearing aids, and I try to be in sonic environments that are helpful. But I have to really pay attention, and say, 'Can you say that one more time?' quite a lot. I do think that hearing loss has actually improved my abilities as a musician. I have to know my instrument better and I have to listen to my 'Inner Melodic Generator' much more. It's sort of like a blind person who has a keen spatial awareness of the furniture in their room. I feel like I'm developing some superpowers, from having to play music 'silently' from my imagination. This definitely helps me with writing and improvising, and playing with intention. But if you find a button that will bring my hearing back, please press it."

'WEREWOLVES OF PORTLAND'

"That's my new album! I played all the instruments, wrote all the songs, and drew all the cartoons for the video of 'Argument About Pie'. I think that might be the first lyric video for an instrumental song, so I'm proud to have done that. I wrote two songs inspired by the life of Dmitri Shostakovich. I love his Fifth Symphony and I was amazed when I read that [20th Century Soviet dictator] Joseph Stalin basically said, 'I didn't like your last composition very much. If this new one doesn't please me I'll be sending you to a work camp in Siberia.' As crazy as things are in Portland, at least I can release an album with no threats like that. Does that cheer me up? Well, I'm always cheered up. I can play the guitar!"

THE FUTURE OF GUITAR

"After making 11,000 Video Exchanges for my online school I have to say that the information is there! It's not a secret how to play the guitar. But every player is actually self-taught. Every player has to decide what to listen to and how closely to listen to it. As long as people can find their own 'Inner Melodic Generator' there will be good music happening on every instrument. But guitar is noisy, so be careful. Actually, just come to my school and I'll show you how to control that fire-breathing dragon!"

THE FUTURE OF PAUL GILBERT

"I'm going to keep building my superpowers and I'm going to use them to move your heart, make you smile, and get you moving to the groove. I do read my YouTube comments sometimes. When I released my 'Argument About Pie' video, someone wrote 'This new Paul Gilbert song is the most Paul Gilbert Paul Gilbert song I've heard by Paul Gilbert.' I'm hoping to keep getting reviews like that."

Photos: Getty Images/Paul Natkin; Jason Quigley

Mike Varney (in baseball cap) with just a few of the legendary guitarists he's been involved with over the years. L-R: Bumblefoot, George Lynch, Greg Howe, Varney, Eric Gales.

HEAD OF SHRED!

Mike Varney can justifiably claim to have changed the face of metal with his label **Shrapnel Records**, an independent venture launched in 1980 that was dedicated to the development of fast-fingered guitarists looking to push the boundaries of rock music. *Malcolm Dome* interviews the man who knows more about shredding than anyone!

MIKE VARNEY'S WIKIPEDIA ENTRY cites him as "an American musician, record producer, music publisher, and impresario." You might know him better as 'The Head Of Shred'. The man from Novato in the North Bay region of San Francisco, started his musical journey as a guitarist in pre-punk band The Nuns, but first came to wider attention in 1980 as a writer and performer in rock'n'roll musical *Rock Justice* alongside Jefferson Starship singer Marty Balin.

However, that same year – and at the tender age of just 22 – Varney decided that playing in bands wasn't his calling, and that in fact his mission was to give a platform to other exceptional musicians. He started Shrapnel Records, a label dedicated to heavy metal, and Shrapnel soon developed into the destination of choice for whizz kid young guitarists intent on expanding the boundaries of what was considered possible in the realms of playing. Varney was ultimately responsible for bringing the world Yngwie Malmsteen, Marty Friedman, Jason Becker, Paul Gilbert, and countless other inspirational players.

Over 35 years Varney developed Shrapnel into one of the world's most respected homes of metal, while also successfully diversifying into other areas including prog, blues, and even jazz. He eventually sold Shrapnel to Sony-owned distribution company The Orchard in 2015, but remains highly active in the music business, still driven by his passion for guitar and for discovering the next generation of unique talent...

MIKE, YOU'RE KNOWN AS THE MAN WHO SPOTTED AND DEVELOPED A WHOLE RAFT OF TECHNICAL GUITAR PLAYERS IN THE '80S. BUT YOU ACTUALLY STARTED OUT AS A PLAYER YOURSELF...

"I started playing guitar when I was nine years old, but I'm totally self-taught. I would listen to records and copy what was being done. I was still pretty young when I started buying guitars, though I never kept them for long. It wasn't as if I was building up a collection. But I knew there were certain instrument shops in the San Francisco area where I could buy a guitar quite cheaply. I could then take that guitar to other stores where they'd buy it for more than it had originally cost me. That was how I made some money in those days. Now I wish I still had all those guitars."

SO YOU HAD SOMETHING OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT FROM A YOUNG AGE...

"But I also I had a cousin who worked in the record industry. Through him I learnt a lot about how things worked. He even took me along to a CBS Records convention when I was 15 years old. And because of this cousin, I managed to get sent loads of promotional copies of records before they were available in the shops. I got to know Danny Holiday, a well-known radio DJ on the West Coast, and he would regularly invite me along to help myself to all the records he had in his garage. I was let loose and was allowed to take whatever I wanted. I even managed to get hold of some very rare private pressings of albums. This gave me a taste for collecting records, which I still do to this day."

PERHAPS SURPRISINGLY, YOU PLAYED IN WHAT'S BEEN TERMED A 'PRE-PUNK BAND' CALLED THE NUNS...

"It's true that they were punks, and it was a little odd for me to be in a band like that, because punk was never my thing. But at least I got to meet Phil Mogg through that band. We opened for The Dictators at the Whiskey A Go Go in Hollywood back in 1977. Phil came down to the gig and afterwards we got chatting backstage. Michael Schenker had gone missing and Paul Chapman had been brought back in from Lone Star to help UFO out temporarily. Phil told me that the band was actively looking for a permanent guitarist and I felt someone I knew would be perfect for the job. So when UFO played at Winterland Gardens in San Francisco later in the year I went down with this guy, intending to introduce him to Phil and see if he fitted. But by then Michael was back on board, so ultimately that went nowhere."

> "I DIDN'T WANT TO START A GENERAL METAL LABEL. I KNEW I NEEDED AN ANGLE, SO THAT'S WHEN I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF CONCENTRATING ON EXCITING YOUNG GUITARISTS AND GETTING THEM THE EXPOSURE THEY DESERVED."

YOUR OWN GUITAR PLAYING QUICKLY BROUGHT YOU TO THE ATTENTION OF JEFFERSON STARSHIP VOCALIST MARTY BALIN, RIGHT?

"That's right. I ended up in another group called The Rocky Sullivan Band with guitarist John Cipollina [of Quicksilver Messenger Service fame]. We did a show at the Old Waldorf in San Francisco with Rubicon, who were an early version of what became Night Ranger, featuring Brad Gillis and Jack Blades. Marty Balin came along to see us and he must have been impressed with the way I played, because he got hold of my phone number, called and told me all about his idea for a rock musical called *Rock Justice*, and then asked if I'd get involved in writing the music. I went down to meet him at the studio, but the music he had for the project really wasn't my thing at all. I was much more into metal. But Marty was fine with me reworking all the music to fit in with the way I believed it should sound. EMI signed the project and released a *Rock Justice* soundtrack album in 1980. I wrote about half of the music for it and ended up playing guitar, bass, and keyboards on the album. The *Rock Justice* project got me a lot of attention in the end. I even managed to appear on the cover of *Billboard* magazine holding my Gibson SG."

Photo: LaDonna Gales

UNCOVERED

Mike (second from left) with his pre-punk outfit The Nuns photographed in San Francisco, 31 March 1977

DID YOU MAKE ANY MONEY FROM *ROCK JUSTICE*?

"I made a decent amount from the publishing, because I'd written a lot of the songs, even though the album wasn't a big seller. But by then I'd already decided that I wasn't really cut out to be a rock star. I'd graduated from college with a marketing degree and had noticed that the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal was starting to get a lot of traction in the States. So in 1980 I decided to start my own label to take advantage of this surge in interest in metal. But I didn't want to start a general metal label. I knew I needed an angle, so that's when I came up with the idea of concentrating on exciting young guitarists. I could finance the label, which I decided to call Shrapnel, without the need to borrow any money. So I was self-sufficient from the start."

THE FIRST SHRAPNEL RELEASE WAS A 1981 COMPILATION 'US METAL (UNSUNG GUITAR HEROES)', MOST NOTABLE FOR FEATURING THE RODS TRACK 'GETTIN' HIGHER'.

"That's right, but I had no clue how many copies of the album to press up, so I got 5000 manufactured with no idea how I was going to sell them. Loads of record boxes turned up at my parents' house – I was still living with them at the time – and I stored them in the garage. I didn't have a distribution deal, so started calling every possible company to see whether I could get one of them on board to sell the album. None of them wanted to know, until eventually a company called Greenworld agreed to get involved. It was long before social media, so I had to get mentions in music magazines, take out advertising, and rely on word of mouth. Whatever I did, though, it must have worked. Not only did I sell out of the entire 5000 copies – which was a relief because my parents could have their garage back – but a second pressing of 5000 also sold out. And I started getting sent a lot of tapes."

SHRAPNEL WAS THE VERY DEFINITION OF A COTTAGE INDUSTRY, WASN'T IT?

"Absolutely. I had no staff and everything was down to me. I had no release schedule and was making everything up as I went along. I released a second volume of 'US Metal' and again that did well. I was clearly doing something right, because then Brian Slagel decided to start the Metal Blade label and Jonny Z put Megaforce together. They were following in my footsteps, which proved to me that I was on the right track."

YOU GOT A BIG BREAK IN 1982 WHEN *GUITAR PLAYER* MAGAZINE GAVE YOU A COLUMN...

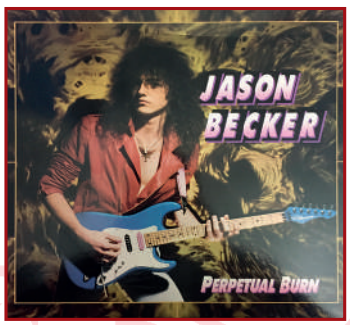
"I'd made an appearance in the magazine's reader's poll at the end of 1980 when I'd done *Rock Justice* and was eventually invited along to a party they were having. Back then *Guitar Player* concentrated on the big names and didn't give much space to the type of young players I was signing. I thought the magazine was missing out, so I cornered one of the main editors at the party and told him I believed the mag should be doing more to promote emerging talent. As a result they offered me my own column, which allowed me to push kids who were taking the art of guitar playing to a new level. Having

that outlet meant I could spread the word about what Shrapnel was trying to achieve – and that meant even more demos came in.

A very young Yngwie Malmsteen (left) in Steeler back in 1983

YOU SAID AT THE TIME THAT YOU GUARANTEED YOU'D LISTEN TO EVERY SINGLE TAPE THAT WAS SENT IN TO YOU...

"And I really did mean it when I said that I was prepared to listen to everything. But it soon became totally impractical. I started to notice that any demo recorded on a specific brand of tape was bound to sound very poor. Recordings on this particular brand of tape were close to unlistenable, and any guitarist who used them clearly didn't have any respect for their own talent. So that ruled those out. Then there were packages that were so tightly wrapped that it became a huge challenge just to open them, so I abandoned those as well. I still tried to listen to at least a few seconds of as many demos as possible, but when you're suddenly deluged with tapes, and face having to wade through them on your own, as well as doing everything else that's involved in running a record company, inevitably you have to find short cuts. Did I miss some major talent? It's possible. And whenever I've met someone over the years who's told me they sent in a tape and never got a response I do apologise to them. I feel bad, but I had to be pragmatic."



"EDDIE VAN HALEN DEFINED THE 1970S, BUT AS WE ENTERED THE NEXT DECADE I WANTED TO FIND THE NEXT MAJOR GUITAR PLAYERS – THE ONES WHO WERE THE NEXT TECHNICAL HEAVYWEIGHTS, AND THE ONES WHO WOULD BRING THE GUITAR INTO A FRESH ERA. I THINK I DID THAT."

NEVERTHELESS, A BUNCH OF INTERESTING GUITAR PLAYERS STARTED COMING OUT OF THE WOODWORK...

"It started happening pretty quickly. Just after Randy Rhoads died in 1982 Paul Gilbert sent me a staggering demo. Then he phoned me up out of the blue and asked if I could get him into Ozzy Osbourne's band as the new guitarist. I knew image was going to be crucial for whoever got that job, so I asked Paul a few questions. 'Are you fat?' 'No, I'm not.' 'OK, are you bald?' 'No, I have a full head of hair.' 'Do you have a beard?' 'No, I'm clean shaven.' Then I asked him how old he was. The answer: 'I'm 15.' Can you imagine that? Here was this 15-year-old kid who wanted me to get him into Ozzy's band! Of course Paul has gone on to have an amazing career and I was immediately impressed with his guitar skills when he sent me that demo all those years ago. But he wasn't ready for Ozzy at that time. Eventually Paul moved from Pittsburgh to LA and I got him into a band called Racer X. I signed the group to Shrapnel and set him on his way. I still listen to their [1986] 'Street Lethal' album, and 'Second Heat' [from '87] too. I still love the way they sound."

COOL. NOW WHAT WAS THE STORY WITH YNGWIE MALMSTEEN?

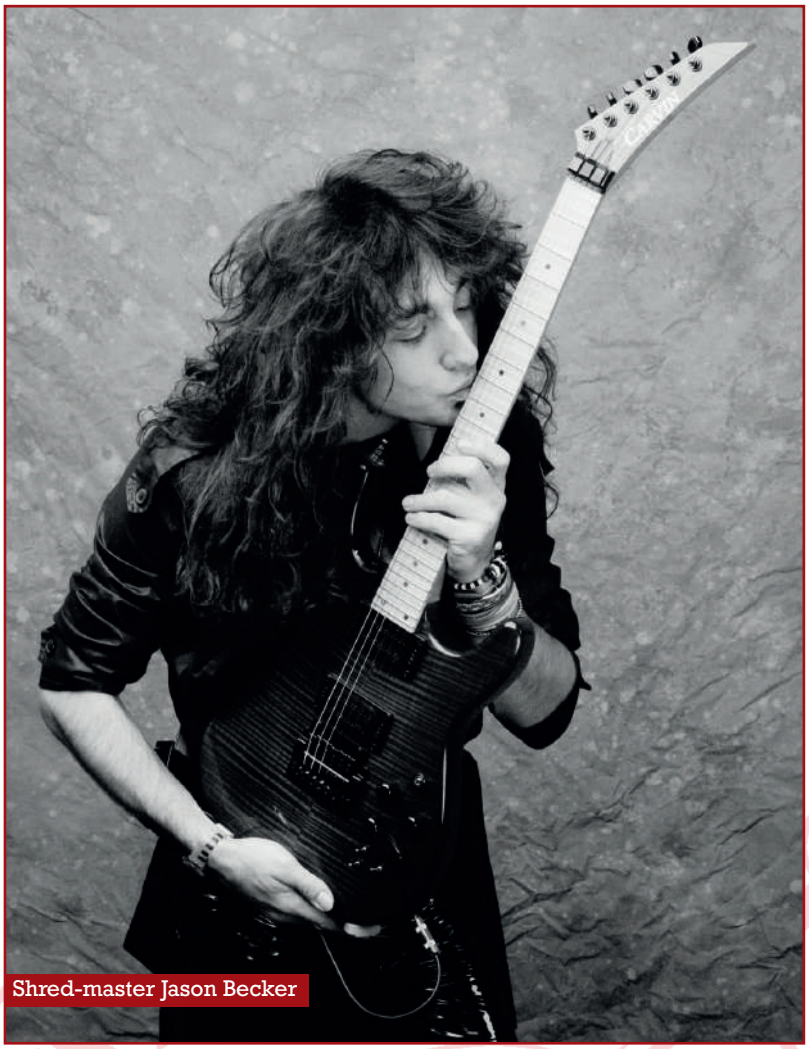
"I heard a demo from this kid in Sweden and it was very impressive, so I got talking to him. What Yngwie wanted me to do was pay for him to come over to the States, but that would have been a massive gamble for a small label like mine. I said I wasn't prepared to do it, even though I knew Yngwie was enormously talented. The thing was, I was working with Ron Keel at the time and he was looking for the right guitarist for his band Steeler. Ron came over to my place and listened to a load of demos I had of young guitarists, and when he heard Yngwie's tape he really sat up and took notice. 'I like the way this one plays,' he told me. 'I bet you do!' I said. And somehow Ron persuaded me to bring Yngwie over from Sweden. I produced the first Steeler album ['Steeler', released on Shrapnel in 1983] and word spread incredibly fast about Yngwie and his playing. *Metal Mania* magazine even went so far as to put the headline 'Yngwie Is God' on their cover. It turned out that Yngwie wasn't committed to Steeler and within a few months had left to further his own career. But I can't blame him for that."

YNGWIE WAS AT THE VANGUARD OF WHAT BECOME KNOWN AS THE SHREDDING MOVEMENT, THE CLUSTER OF GUITARISTS WHO BLENDED INSANE TECHNIQUE WITH SUPER-FAST PLAYING. IT WAS A STYLE OF MUSIC THAT TRULY DIVIDED OPINION. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON SHRED NOW?

"If anyone who hates that type of playing points the finger at me and says I'm to blame for it, then obviously I'm not comfortable with that. Of course I don't enjoy that sort of negative vibe. But what I set out to do was to find exciting young guitar players. My attitude was ►

Photo: Getty Images/Ed Perlstein/Redferns; Getty Images/Chris Walter/WireImage

that Eddie Van Halen defined the 1970s, but as we entered the next decade and I started Shrapnel I wanted to be the one to find the next major guitar players – the ones who were the next technical heavyweights and the ones who would bring the guitar into a fresh era. I think I did that. Look at the list of guitarists I've worked with over the years, from Richie Kotzen to Greg Howe to Marty Friedman. I could sit here and reel off the names of a lot of wonderful guitarists I helped bring to the fore. So at the end of the day I'm very happy to be acknowledged as the person who brought shredding into the public consciousness."



Shred-master Jason Becker

"MY STRENGTH WAS IN WORKING WITH MUSICIANS AND IN HAVING THE ABILITY TO SPOT HOW DISPARATE ARTISTS COULD RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER."

IT SOMETIMES GETS LOST IN THE MISTS OF HISTORY, BUT YOU AND SHRAPNEL RECORDS DIDN'T ONLY DEAL IN PURE SHREDDERS, DID YOU?

"Not at all. I wanted to sign Metallica right at the start of their career, which is about as far from shred as you can imagine. Even in their very early days there was the beginning of a buzz about them, so I met up with the band and what struck me was how focused and ambitious Lars Ulrich was. He knew exactly what he wanted and already had the artwork done for a first album cover, which was a hand holding a machete coming out of a toilet bowl! Lars told me he was determined to get Tom Allom to produce the first Metallica album, because he loved the sound Tom got in the studio with Judas Priest. But I immediately sensed that was going to be a problem for me. Someone like Allom would demand a fee of about $50,000 to produce any record and that was way out of my league. So reluctantly I had to end all negotiations with Metallica, even though I would have loved to have them on the label. In the end Jonny Z got them for Megaforce. But you know what? Tom Allom didn't produce the 'Kill 'Em All' album, nor did Lars's artwork get used. Maybe I should have been a little bolder. Maybe I should have signed the band and then persuaded Lars to use a much cheaper producer!"

OR MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE IT YOURSELF...

"It's true that I produced a lot of the Shrapnel records working out of Prairie Sun Studios in Cotati, California, which is just north of San Francisco. I don't remember exactly why I worked there so much. It may have been because we managed to get some free studio time in the early days of the label. But it was a superb place, really well equipped, set on two acres of land with both rehearsal and residential space. It wasn't cheap to record there, but I managed to strike very good deals, which made it pretty cost effective for everyone."

WAS THERE A RECORDING BUDGET FOR SHRAPNEL ALBUMS THAT WAS SET IN STONE?

"In the early days we had what I termed 'The 100 Hour Shrapnel Challenge', which was to get a complete album recorded in 100 hours. We didn't have much money, but as more money came in I found that I could offer bigger budgets for studio time. There was never a one-size-fits-all budget for the recording sessions. It varied according to the situation, and my priority was always to make the best possible record."

EVENTUALLY YOU STARTED DIVERSIFYING FROM THE LABEL'S TRADITIONAL STOCK...

"I started Magna Carta in 1989 because Pete Morticelli, who managed The Rods and Icon, believed there was a market for progressive rock, even though it wasn't fashionable. We became partners in Magna Carta, but he did most of the work. Pete put much more energy into it than I did, and we did put out records by people like [Testament guitarist] Alex Skolnick, [former Dream Theater keyboard player] Derek Sherinian, and [King's X bassist and vocalist] Doug Pinnick."

BUT YOU DIDN'T STOP THERE...

"Shrapnel was always a guitar-centric metal label. But by the early '90s the arrival of grunge meant that a lot of guitarists on the roster were struggling. I know of a few who were turned down for bands because they were too

Paul Gilbert (left) and Bruce Bouillet shredding on their pink and green guitars in Racer X

talented! It seemed grunge acts wanted guitarists who played badly! Nobody wanted extended guitar solos either, so I began to look at other options that would allow guitarists to repurpose themselves. I started Blues Bureau International and that also allowed me to work with older musicians like Leslie West, Pat Travers, and Glenn Hughes. They weren't pure blues talents, but they were in that vein. Plus Blues Bureau International meant that I could work with hot young guns like Eric Gales."

THEN YOU BRANCHED OUT EVEN FURTHER, THIS TIME INTO JAZZ WITH THE TONE CENTER LABEL IN 1997...

"I'd wanted to do a jazz label as far back as 1982. In fact, at that time I even persuaded [British legend] Allan Holdsworth to record an album for it. But when things didn't work out with him I lost all interest in a jazz label. Then years later I got in contact with [Journey drummer] Steve Smith. He lived near to my parents, had his own studio, and wanted to bring jazz-fusion artists to people's attention. So we did a deal – Steve effectively acted as an A&R man, and we also went on to record 17 albums with him performing alongside various musicians in the genre."

SHRAPNEL PRIMARILY DEALT IN INSTRUMENTAL ALBUMS. WHY WAS THAT?

"That had something to do with the fact that I had a big issue with some of the lyrics being written in the metal sphere at the time. They were dark and violent, and I was never comfortable with that. I felt that if I stuck to music and avoided songs with words, then I would never have to deal with lyrics whose sentiments I disagreed with."

IN 2015 YOU FINALLY SOLD SHRAPNEL TO A SONY SUBSIDIARY CALLED THE ORCHARD. WHAT WAS YOUR THINKING BEHIND THE DECISION?

"I'd been running the label for 35 years by then and I'd done it mostly on my own. It was time for me to step down and get out while I was still on top. What I liked about The Orchard was that they were prepared to give the catalogue the care and attention it deserved. They were prepared to reissue albums from the catalogue that had been deleted a long time ago, and they're prepared to listen to my ideas! There's currently a plan for a double live Racer X album on vinyl. I suggested that one record should be pressed on pink vinyl, the colour of Paul Gilbert's guitar, and the other should be pressed in green, the colour of Bruce Bouillet's guitar. And that's what they're doing, which is very gratifying."

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF ALL BUT RETIRED NOW?

"Not at all. I'm still producing albums and I hope to find more exciting young talent. I'm currently working with a great band called Gravity Amplifiers. They've got a fine guitarist called Jason Walker, who's also an excellent singer, so he's a double winner. The album won't come out on Shrapnel, though. I do also have a hankering to start up a reissues label."

IN CONCLUSION MIKE, WHY DO YOU THINK THE SHRAPNEL LABEL WORKED OUT SO WELL FOR YOU?

"I'd say it was a combination of luck, tenacity, and the fact that I was immersed in the music 24/7. My obsession with the guitar drove me to find more and more amazing people, and to have been able to help them start off their careers has been a joy. My strength was in working with musicians and in having the ability to spot how disparate artists could relate to one another. What's interesting is that now there are a lot of people rediscovering Shrapnel artists. They were fans of these guitarists when they were growing up, then lost interest when they started to have families etc. But now these people are in their 50s and 60s and they're back listening to these albums.

"The artists I signed to Shrapnel and my other labels, and the albums they made, are the proof of what I've done in music, and I'm happy to be judged on that."

Photos: Ross Pelton; Getty Images/Paul Natkin

L-R: Don Barnes, Donnie Van Zant, and Jeff Carlisi cooking up that distinctive 38 Special Southern rock/AOR hybrid

38 SPECIAL
'SPECIAL FORCES'
DATELINE: 4 MAY 1982

WAS IT REALLY POSSIBLE TO MELD SOUTHERN ROCK WITH AOR AND COME UP WITH SOMETHING GREAT? MAYBE THIS ALBUM CAN GIVE US THE ANSWER…

38 SPECIAL
'Special Forces'
(A&M)
Released: 1982

LINE UP
DON BARNES – guitar, lead vocals, backing vocals
JEFF CARLISI – guitar, steel guitar
STEVE BROOKINS – drums
LARRY JUNSTROM – bass guitar
DONNIE VAN ZANT – lead vocals, backing vocals
JACK GRONDIN – drums

ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS
TERRY EMERY – piano
STEVE MCRAY – keyboards
JIMMY BARNES – harp
CAROL BRISTOW – backing vocals
LU MOSS – backing vocals

PRODUCED & ENGINEERED BY
Rodney Mills

CO-PRODUCED BY
Don Barnes and Jeff Carlisi

RECORDED AT
Studio One, Doraville, Georgia, USA

TRACK LISTING
Caught Up In You (Don Barnes, Jeff Carlisi, Jim Peterik)
Back Door Stranger (Jeff Carlisi, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)
Back On The Track (Jeff Carlisi, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)
Chain Lightnin' (Don Barnes, Jim Peterik, Donnie Van Zant)
Rough-Housin' (Don Barnes, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)
You Keep Runnin' Away (Don Barnes, Jeff Carlisi, Jim Peterik)
Breakin' Loose (Jeff Carlisi, Jack Grondin, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)
Take 'Em Out (Don Barnes, Jeff Carlisi, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)
Firestarter (Don Barnes, Larry Steele, Donnie Van Zant)

Photo: Bill O'Leary/Timeless Images

DON BARNES ON 'SPECIAL FORCES': "I was dating a woman at the time and I said, 'I can't get any work done, I'm so caught up in you all the time!' Then I thought, 'That's a good start for a song, pretty positive.' And they still play it all over the country today!"

IN THE EARLY TO mid-'70s the emergence of both The Allman Brothers Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd helped popularise music that came to be termed 'Southern rock'. As was often the case, once one or two bands became successful, record companies would look to sign similar-sounding acts. And so the likes of Blackfoot, the Outlaws, and Molly Hatchet were given their chance to shine.

The problem these bands encountered was that, at its core, Southern rock relied on long songs and neverending guitar solos to give it its unique flavour. As radio formats became more defined, Southern rock's somewhat demanding sound suddenly found itself squeezed off the airwaves. So if you weren't already considered a classic act like Skynyrd it was hard to break through. As the '70s turned into the '80s it became increasingly clear that what was required – at least commercially – was for these newer Southern signings to develop a more radio-friendly AOR feel.

BUT CHANGING a sound that felt like it was in the DNA of the musicians who were making the music proved tricky. Blackfoot tried it by adding erstwhile Uriah Heep keyboardist Ken Hensley on their 'Siogo' album in 1983. The album failed. That same year Doc Holliday took a drastic approach by going to Musicland Studios in Munich, Germany, and working with renowned Queen producer Mack on 'Modern Medicine'. The end result, full of swirling synths and a curiously robotic sound, was bizarre. Molly Hatchet tried reducing three guitars to two and adding keyboards on their 1984 effort 'The Deed Is Done'. Again the results were very disappointing.

38 Special is the only Southern rock band that could rightly claim that they successfully managed to cross over into AOR Top 40 territory. The band from Jacksonville, Florida was formed way back in 1974 and featured vocalist Donnie Van Zant, younger brother of Skynyrd frontman Ronnie. Their first two studio albums for A&M, 1977's '38 Special' and 1979's 'Special Delivery', were traditional Southern rock affairs and didn't set the charts alight. But with their third studio outing, 1979's 'Rockin' Into The Night', it became clear that the 38 Special sound was changing. The title track was written by three members of AOR band Survivor and had been slated for inclusion on that group's debut album that also appeared in 1979. Their producer Ron Nevison felt the song was too Southern for Survivor, but a rough mix eventually found its way to 38 Special's manager Mark Spector. His band loved the song so much that they recorded their own version of the tune, *and* named their album after it. This proved to be a sound commercial move as 'Rockin' Into The Night' went on to become 38 Special's first *Billboard* Top 50 US hit.

One of the song's writers, Survivor man Jim Peterik, went on to influence 38's fourth studio album, 1981's 'Wild Eyed Southern Boys'. Peterik wrote or co-wrote four songs, three of which –'Hold On Loosely', 'Fantasy Girl', and the title track – charted as singles. 'Wild Eyed Southern Boys' was the band's first US platinum seller.

UNDERSTANDABLY 38 SPECIAL were full of confidence going into their fifth studio album, 'Special Forces'. Their secret weapon in blending Southern rock with AOR was the fact that the group boasted two very different singers in their ranks. Don Barnes's style was suited to the more radio-friendly material, while Donnie Van Zant could belt out the heavier stuff. Producer Rodney Mills, meanwhile, had first worked with 38 Special on 'Rockin' Into The Night' and by the time of 'Special Forces' he knew the group inside out.

38 SPECIAL'S SECRET WEAPON IN BLENDING SOUTHERN ROCK WITH AOR WAS THE FACT THAT THE GROUP BOASTED TWO VERY DIFFERENT SINGERS IN THEIR RANKS. DON BARNES'S STYLE WAS SUITED TO THE MORE RADIO-FRIENDLY MATERIAL, WHILE DONNIE VAN ZANT COULD BELT OUT THE HEAVIER STUFF.

THE ALBUM was released in 1982 and for my money marks the band's creative highpoint. It spawned two Top 40 hits, with 'Caught Up In You' – co-written by Barnes, Carlisi and Peterik – making Top 10.

'Chain' Lightnin'' and 'You Keep Runnin' Away' garnered decent radio play too, but 'Special Forces' also offered great album tracks. 'Back Door Stranger' stands out with its heavy drum intro and powerhouse riffing. Donnie Van Zant is on fire here as he snarls "*Back door stranger, a fair warning he's out tonight*," while Jeff Carlisi lets rip with a scorching guitar solo. Producer Rodney Mills comes into his own on 'Rough-Housin''. His work here is spot on, with bass, drums, and harmonica all beautifully layered and very clear in the mix. And for those who are looking for Southern rock roots there's album closer 'Firestarter', where the chicken-scratch guitars are truly smoking!

HONESTLY, THE Southern rock/AOR crossover didn't deliver much great music. But 38 Special, and 'Special Forces' in particular, were the exception that proved the rule.

XAVIER RUSSELL

ORIGINAL REVIEW

"While 38 Special may not have the originality and presence of a band like Skynyrd, it may, with albums like 'Special Forces', one day have its popularity."

– Steve Newton, *Georgia Straight*, 4 June 1982

'SPECIAL FORCES' FACT: Although not officially a member of 38 Special, Larry Steele was still very much part of the 38 family. He co-wrote six of the nine tracks on 'Special Forces' and worked as the band's stage manager for many years.

STRIKTLY FOR KONNOISSEURS

MONSTER ROCK ALBUMS FOR THOSE WHO NEED TO GO DEEPER

T2 – 'It'll All Work Out In Boomland'

(DECCA)

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1970

LINE UP
KEITH CROSS – GUITAR, KEYBOARDS, HARMONY VOCALS
BERNARD JINKS – BASS, HARMONY VOCALS
PETER DUNTON – LEAD VOCALS, DRUMS

1970 WAS SURELY *THE* pivotal year in the genesis of the music that readers of this magazine hold so dear. The idea of a hippy utopia had been well and truly killed by the reality of the Vietnam War, and the Woodstock dream turning into a nightmare at Altamont. But as has always been the case, out of adversity great art was born. The psychedelia of the mid and late '60s started fusing with the hard-edged blues rock of Led Zeppelin, Cream, and Hendrix to produce something even tougher.

This music took many forms. There was quasi-classicism from King Crimson and Yes. Black Sabbath and Budgie developed a savage downbeat drone. Deep Purple and Uriah Heep opted for furious power. And in that one glorious year of 1970 we were treated to all of Sabbath's 'Black Sabbath' and 'Paranoid', Uriah Heep's 'Very 'Eavy Very 'Umble', 'Led Zeppelin III', and King Crimson's 'In The Wake of Poseidon'. Is it any wonder that other great records would slip through the net and pass unnoticed? T2's 'It'll All Work Out In Boomland' is one such album.

KEITH CROSS had built himself a reputation as a hot young guitarist after T2 made an appearance at the Isle Of Wight Festival and played a residency at the Marquee. But due to internal strife the band split even before they'd had a chance to properly promote this album. Cross went on to form an acoustic duo with another guitarist, Peter Ross, as the rest of T2 laboured on to record an unreleased album before calling it quits in 1972.

At the time of its original vinyl release 'It'll All Work Out In Boomland' featured three songs on one side and a single monster track on the other. The best number on the first side is the eight-minute-plus last track 'No More White Horses', a song that ranks with the greatest of the era. 'In Circles', meanwhile, is a fine riff rocker that must surely have worked well as an opening live number. Side one is completed by the shortest song on the album, the rather lovely 'J.L.T.'. Clocking in at a still-lengthy 5 minutes and 49 seconds, it's a gentler number that showcases an altogether mellower side to the band.

Lasting 21 minutes 12 seconds, 'Morning' is perfectly worthy of one side of vinyl. The song begins with an acoustic guitar delivering dreamy psychedelia, before serious hard power rock develops, welded together by some mesmerising guitar solos. Keith Cross riffs and solos like Ritchie Blackmore, then switches to a style more reminiscent of the subtlety of Richard Thompson.

'IT'LL ALL Work Out In Boomland' has just been reissued as a three-disc set on Esoteric Records, appending the 'unreleased' second album and some promising demos from after Cross left the band. The album is a product of its time in that patience is required for the music to unravel, and the old adage that there was a plethora of genius guitarists around at the time but a dearth of great singers also holds true. But if epic guitar albums are your bag, then this is a release you should check out.

Giles Hamilton

AIRRACE – 'Shaft Of Light'

(ATCO)

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1984

LINE UP
KEITH MURRELL – LEAD VOCALS
LAURIE MANSWORTH – GUITAR, BACKING VOCALS
JASON BONHAM – DRUMS
TOBY SADLER – KEYBOARDS, BASS, BACKING VOCALS
JIM REID – BASS GUITAR

FOLLOWING A FALLING OUT with fellow guitarist Kenny Cox, 19-year-old Laurie Mansworth quit New Wave Of British Heavy Metal band More sometime around 1982 and opted to explore a more melodic sound. The band he put together, Airrace, took its cues from Foreigner and Journey. An inaugural gig at London's Marquee club in 1983 with former Girl frontman Phil Lewis on vocals attracted the attention of Led Zeppelin's former manager Peter Grant, who made noises about wanting to manage the group. Grant introduced drummer Jason 'Son Of John' Bonham to the group, and when Lewis departed to join The New Torpedos, Airrace eventually settled on former Moontier man Keith Murrell to front the act.

WITH A line-up completed by former White Spirit keyboardist Toby Sadler, and bassist Jim Reid, Grant's influence saw the band quickly land a coveted opening slot on Def Leppard's UK 'Pyromania' tour. Airrace were all set to sign with Zeppelin's former label Atlantic, thanks in part to Mansworth's close relationship with the label's top UK exec Phil Carson. Grant, however, wanted the band to sign to MCA, but when Carson offered Airrace £1million to ditch Grant and sign to Atlantic subsidiary Atco Mansworth took the bait.

AS ATCO poured money into the band, Airrace soon started recording their debut album at Atlantic Studios in New York City with rising star producer Beau Hill at the helm. Things didn't go smoothly, though, and when 'Shaft Of Light' appeared it was dominated by an electronic drum sound that Bonham was deeply unhappy with. The bonus tracks on the Rock Candy Records reissue give an indication of the way Airrace would have preferred to sound, rougher and aimed less squarely at US radio.

WHATEVER THE band may have thought of 'Shaft Of Light', though, to my mind it's still one of the finest UK AOR albums ever. Powered along by a superb vocal performance from Keith Murrell alongside Toby Sadler's towering keyboards, the album is a finely tuned melodic masterpiece reminiscent of Touch and Roadmaster, but with an added dash of muscle courtesy of Laurie Mansworth's sterling guitar work.

Tracks like 'I Don't Care', 'Promise To Call', and 'First One Over The Line' bristle with pomp rock intent. But it's 'Brief Encounter' that is the band's true ace in the hole, building from a gentle intro into a crescendo of melodic might and exiting on the back of a swaggering solo from Mansworth. 'Caught In A Game' and 'Do You Want My Love Again' were clearly aimed at pushing the band toward the US market, but the album never gained any traction there. The rumour goes that a bruised Peter Grant used his influence with Atlantic Records to bury 'Shaft Of Light'. Shows supporting Queen, AC/DC, Krokus, and Meat Loaf failed to ignite serious interest and Airrace called it a day in 1985.

Rob Evans

ROCK CANDY REISSUES

THE VERY LATEST HOT RE-RELEASE FROM THE LABEL

SILENT RAGE – 'Don't Touch Me There'

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1989

LINE UP
JESSE DAMON – lead vocals, lead and rhythm guitars
MARK HAWKINS – rhythm and lead guitars, lead and backing vocals, keys
E.J. CURSE – bass and backing vocals
BRIAN JAMES – drums

BACKGROUND
When it comes to big, melodic hard rock, LA outfit Silent Rage's second album 'Don't Touch Me There' is hard to beat. It's packed with all the moves and grooves you'd expect from a project guided by AOR legend Paul Sabu and Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, two leading lights from an era where bombastic hooks and commanding vocals ruled the airwaves. Silent Rage had already established their credentials with an independent 1987 debut release, 'Shattered Hearts', an album that indicated this would be a band to watch. It attracted great reviews and helped Silent Rage gain a reputation as one of the best up-and-coming acts of the time.

It didn't take long for the group to come to the attention of Simmons, who'd recently started his Simmons Records label through RCA. Gene quickly snapped up the band and masterminded the recording of 'Don't Touch Me There', with Paul Sabu in the production seat. As you might imagine the sound was huge, pushing the energy levels through the roof, with Sabu fashioning the hooks and arrangements to create a sound that easily competed with the rest of the competition. Think Giuffria, House Of Lords, and Night Ranger.

Front and centre in the band's wall of sound are Jesse Damon's vocals that engulf the proceedings, sending the songs out into the stratosphere. There's no doubt that this album should have catapulted Silent Rage into the big time. Sadly it wasn't to be. Many people felt that if the musical times hadn't been a-changing, then Silent Rage's brand

of big-hearted rock could have ruled the world. As it was, new sonic fashions cruelly robbed the band of the chance to leave a larger legacy.

WHAT VOCALIST AND GUITARIST JESSE DAMON SAYS
"Gene Simmons brought the ELO song 'Cant Get Her Out Of My Head' [originally titled 'Can't Get It Out Of My Head'] to our attention and wanted us to listen to their version. Gene thought it would be cool to play it the way rock bands would play it at that period of time in the late '80s. He had this vision of us really turning the song around, and how we recorded it was exactly how he'd wanted us to do it... It set into motion a relationship that transcended the Silent Rage recording sessions and developed into working with Gene on Kiss-related projects."

TRACKS TO CHECK OUT
There's plenty to get excited about here, especially 'Rebel With A Cause', a re-record from the band's debut LP 'Shattered Hearts' and the album's most obvious anthem. Elsewhere check out 'Touch Me' (which could have made a great Kiss tune) and the title track 'Don't Touch Me There', with its impressive melodic heft.

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK
The Rock Candy CD is fully remastered, with a 16-page colour booklet, enhanced artwork, and a 4000-word interview with band members conducted by *Rock Candy Magazine* writer Dave Reynolds.

THE WORD FROM RC BOSS DEREK OLIVER
"There's no question that this album is a touchstone recording of the late '80s. It defines an era and a sound we all wish was still in vogue. Sure, acts like Slaughter and Damn Yankees grasped the baton and made hay while the sun shone. But Silent Rage had the chutzpah to compete with the best of 'em. 'Don't Touch Me There' still sounds fresh and exciting thanks to the quality of the band's material and the unrelenting power of the performances."

Buy this album and tons of other great releases at *www.rockcandyrecords.com*

ROCK CANDY PICKS

THE STUFF THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION

JOE BONAMASSA 'Now Serving: Royal Tea Live From The Ryman' (PROVOGUE)

DVD

WHAT'S THE STORY?
The most prolific man in blues rock releases a new live album and DVD, a remixed and remastered version of Bonamassa's show at the iconic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville that was livestreamed to audiences across 44 different countries last year. The guitarist has, it must be said, issued a ridiculous amount of live recordings over the years, so some of you might believe this is overkill. If not, then what you get here is nine tracks from Joe's 2020 hit album 'Royal Tea', together with three numbers first recorded for 2000's 'A New Day Yesterday' that has recently been reworked for its 20th anniversary as 'A New Day Now'.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Astounding! This is clearly a live album, but with the clarity of a really well-produced – though not *over*-produced – studio album. Every note of Joe's incredible playing can be heard pin-sharp, as can the excellent musicianship of his band. Joe's accomplished vocals are often overlooked, but here they're front and centre. Enjoy listening and watching as he pulls off a number of different singing tones that perfectly match each and every one of his guitar styles!

BEST BITS
The scintillating 'Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye'. Co-written with Bernie Marsden, the tune deals with one of Joe's real-life relationships in just shy of 10 minutes of sublime music. It's plainly heartfelt stuff, and Joe delivers a three-minute-plus guitar solo that really yanks at the heartstrings. Other highlights include a pumped-up version of the 1969 Free song 'Walk In My Shadow', and 'Beyond The Silence', a number that moves seamlessly between delicate and explosive.

THE VERDICT
This is high-quality material delivered by a guitarist whose playing has never been better. It makes you wonder how on earth The Ryman didn't catch fire given how incendiary this music is! Joe performs with commitment and consummate skill, pulling out all the stops to force through a connection with his virtual audience. Bonamassa's best live album to date.

Ross Sampson

BUCKCHERRY 'Hellbound' (EARACHE)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Buckcherry's last album, 2019's 'Warpaint', was a brilliantly schizophrenic affair, a curious amalgam of melodic hard rock mixed with vicious, gritty, no bullsh*t rock'n'roll. It also sounded like frontman Josh Todd – the only original member still in the band – was up for fighting the entire world, such was the level of anger that you could feel howling out of the speakers on the band's eighth studio collection. Interestingly, 'Hellbound' for some reason finds Todd much more at peace with the world, though of course it's all relative. Todd is still very much in the business of delivering high energy rock'n'roll music.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
With Jetboy guitarist Billy Rowe now in the ranks replacing Kevin Roentgen, Buckcherry have embraced a pleasingly more commercial direction than that of 'Warpaint'. The Aerosmith swagger of 'Gun' and the funky 'No More Lies' prove the point, and it's surely no coincidence that Aerosmith collaborator Marti Frederiksen – co-producer of three Buckcherry albums between 2008 and 2013 – is reunited with the group. But that's not to say that the band have wimped out on 'Hellbound'. With a bit of punk here, a touch of metal there, a fair bit of glam rock style strutting elsewhere and the obligatory ballad ('The Way') as well, here they offer another finely balanced record that has much to recommend.

BEST BITS
The opening '54321' is a real sh*tkicker. 'So Hott' (the extra 't' is clearly for emphasis) is particularly melodic, yet also offers some pretty raucous riffage reminiscent of Guns N' Roses. The title track, meanwhile, doesn't sound particularly demonic. But it does have a really cool AC/DC-meets-Aerosmith vibe.

THE VERDICT
An impressive, perhaps more mature outing from Buckcherry. When they're at their most raw Todd and his crew manage to harness punk, metal and glam rock in a way that only the likes of The Wildhearts and Backyard Babies have been able to do. Yet they also manage to create widely accessible albums at one and the same time.

Dave Reynolds

ROCK CANDY PICKS

THE STUFF THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION

RORY GALLAGHER 'Rory Gallagher – 50th Anniversary Edition' (UNIVERSAL)

DVD

WHAT'S THE STORY?
There have been many expanded editions of late, with labels dredging up endless leftovers, stuff regarded at the time as inferior to versions of songs chosen for the album in question. But that isn't what this reissue does. The 50th anniversary release of Gallagher's eponymous debut album has been compiled by Rory's brother Donal and features the original album alongside many previously unheard tracks and alternative takes. How much you get all depends on which set you buy; prime real estate being a gloriously expanded five-disc edition (four CDs, one DVD) that includes a hardback book and a never-before-released concert filmed in 1971 for French TV.

WHAT RORY GALLAGHER SAID
"Most of the stuff is done without overdubbing, it's just done. We went in with the vocals and everything under one thing. It's the only way to record this sort of music. If you dub vocals on you can't do any interweaving with the guitar as you would do normally."

ANY EXTRAS?
The cleaned-up original album tracks do justice to the recordings, providing polished and punchy versions that fully justify this reappraisal. The book contains rare pics by rock photographer Barrie Wentzell taken at Advision Studios where the album was recorded, reprinted music paper interviews, some hand-written lyrics by Rory, plus notes by bassist Gerry McAvoy and Donal Gallagher. Special mention must be made of two particular outtakes; 'At The Bottom' (later re-recorded for 1975's 'Against The Grain' album) and 'Advision Jam'.

HIGHLIGHTS
From the original album it doesn't get much better than the remastered 'Laundromat', a song about the launderette below Gallagher's flat at the time in London's Earls Court. 'Can't Believe It's True' is a seven-minute epic with a terrific acoustic guitar refrain topped by an exquisite electric solo, while folksy ballads 'Just The Smile' and 'Wave Myself Goodbye' also stand out.

Derek Oliver

HEAVY WATER 'Red Brick City'

(SILVER LINING MUSIC)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Saxon's eternal warrior Biff Byford teams up with his musician son Seb for an album that's something of a May to December bromance: "It's great for me and for him, really," says Biff. "I'm getting off on his excitement and his first time doing things, and he gets off on that wisdom I've learned over the years."

Lockdown seems to have fostered Biff's creativity. 'Red Brick City' joins last year's solo record 'School Of Hard Knocks' and Saxon's recent covers album 'Inspirations' in the racks.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Much of the publicity calls the record 'blues-based', which is often a phrase used when holidaying musos knock out a standard solo project. But luckily for us that's not the case here. For the blues references think more in the vein of Led Zeppelin, especially on the standout 'Medicine Man'. There's lots more to 'Red Brick City' than that, though. Dave Kemp contributes saxophone to the jangly pop of 'Follow This Moment', there's some traditional macho balladry on 'Tree In The Wind,' and some contemporary and extremely heavy metal via the title track and 'Solution'.

BEST BITS
'Follow This Moment' is an obvious one for its sheer unlikeliness, a definite earworm once its apparently slight, dreamy summer melody catches hold. Seb Byford is a terrific guitarist, producing real tone and class on both this track and 'Tree In The Wind', and then some huge and impressive riffs for the more Zeppelin-inspired material.

THE VERDICT
The quality of the songwriting here is a very happy surprise – although perhaps it shouldn't be. Byford has been the voice of Saxon for so long, and their tropes have become so familiar, that there's something of a tendency to brush them off as old warhorses put out to pasture. Here we have a creatively reinvigorated Biff working with a generation of musicians who see things differently to him, and the outcome of this encounter is of genuine interest. Hopefully this won't be a one-off.

Jon Hotten

Photo: Barrie Wentzell

KK'S PRIEST 'Sermons Of The Sinner'

(EX1 RECORDS)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Ten years after he left Judas Priest guitarist KK Downing returns with his first ever album outside of that band. The guitarist has assembled his own group of metal reprobates featuring old vocal ally Tim 'Ripper' Owens, who screamed for Priest between 1996 and 2003, along with bassist Tony Newton (Voodoo Six), guitarist AJ Mills (Hostile), and drummer Sean Elg (DeathRiders).

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
You'll be relieved to hear that Downing clearly didn't spend his 41 years in Priest yearning to record hip-hop or a spot of bluegrass. The 69-year-old's riffs and leads bear the indelible mark of Priest, while Owens continues to operate in the same vocal arena as Rob Halford. A couple of tracks do incorporate unexpected elements, however. There are Maiden-like chants on 'Raise Your Fists', while the eight-minute epic 'Metal Through And Through' recalls Manowar. Something may have rubbed off on Downing when he made a one-off live appearance with that band's former guitarist Ross The Boss a couple of years back.

BEST BITS
The tracks 'Hellfire Thunderbolt' and 'Sermons Of The Sinner' are both turbo-charged delights, while Downing has the biker anthem angle covered with 'Wild And Free' (popped from the same pod as 'Ram It Down') and 'Brothers Of The Road'. Perhaps the finest tracks are saved for last, though, in the form of 'Hail For The Priest' and 'Return Of The Sentinel', the latter being a sequel to 'The Sentinel' from Priest's 1984 record 'Defenders Of The Faith'. While this new song can't quite match that immortal classic, it is nevertheless sheer fanboy catnip, incorporating some of the original's signature notes as it does.

THE VERDICT
While Downing doesn't even try to reinvent the wheel, it's wonderful to hear the man revel in molten metal once again. This is precisely the powerhouse record you'd expect him to make, and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Jason Arnopp

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN 'Parabellum'

(MUSIC THEORIES RECORDING/MASCOT)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
The Swedish guitar virtuoso releases his 22nd effort under his own name in less than 40 years. That's an astonishing catalogue from one who can never be accused of hiding his light under a bushel. "I assure you that while it may seem as if there are keyboards, everything has been done by myself on guitar," he says, insisting that he recorded the 10 songs, including just four with vocals, "as a singular piece of art."

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
A showcase for the guitarist's desire to play the sh*t out of his instrument at almost every opportunity. The notes come at you from all angles, Malmsteen's left hand working like fury 99 per cent of the time, no matter what the tempo of the music behind him. There's certainly no compromise here. Malmsteen has come to shred and the rest of the world be damned.

BEST BITS
Yngwie says he recorded this album with the intention of it being listened to from start to finish, "not as a collection of 10 tracks you can listen to in any order you want." Is it this desire for flow that makes the songs blend one into the other? The fact that there are so many instrumentals? Or is it Yngwie's compunction to insert that flash, super-fast soloing every time he steps into the spotlight? I found it quite hard to elevate one song above any other – bar the rather overblown ballad 'Eternal Bliss' – which might well please this album's creator.

THE VERDICT
In a bizarre evolution of my listening habits I've found myself getting excited by guitar technicians like Marty Friedman and Paul Gilbert, who are taking high-class musicianship and developing the art form into something new, different and above all, soulful. I listened to 'Parabellum' numerous times, but couldn't see anything beyond a player reaching for the same feeling each time to express his virtuosity. Malmsteen's technical ability is without question. But for me his emotional intelligence remains on a single plain.

Howard Johnson

ROCK CANDY PICKS

THE STUFF THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION

METALLICA 'Metallica'/'The Metallica Blacklist' (BLACKENED)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
In 1991 Metallica's fifth album changed musical history. It took thrash into the mainstream and established Metallica as a phenomenon. Thirty years on we get two albums celebrating what came to be known as 'The Black Album'. A remastered version of the original comes in numerous slice and dice offerings, while 'The Metallica Blacklist' delivers 53 versions of tracks from the original album performed by artists from across the stylistic board.

WHAT DRUMMER LARS ULRICH SAYS
"By the time the songs and the recording were coming together, the confidence level was at an all-time high."

ANY EXTRAS?
Multiple configurations of the original album feature an insane total of 206 separate audio elements. There's a 180 gram double-vinyl LP, standard CD, and three-CD expanded edition, digital, and limited-edition deluxe box set (containing the album remastered on 180 gram double LP, a picture disc, three live LPs, 14 CDs (containing rough mixes, demos, interviews, live shows), 6 DVDs (containing outtakes, behind the scenes, official videos, live shows), a 120-page hardcover book and other bumf. 'The Metallica Blacklist' is a more straightforward affair, offering multiple versions of the songs with all proceeds going to charity.

HIGHLIGHTS
The extra stuff on 'Metallica' is for serious Metallifans, but the remasters make the original songs sound warmer and punchier. 'The Black Album' isn't all great, but the likes of 'Enter Sandman', 'Sad But True', and 'Nothing Else Matters' are nonetheless *bona-fide* classics. 'The Metallica Blacklist' is fascinating, and full marks to the likes of Jason Isbell And The 400 Unit for bending old tunes into new shapes with their quasi-rockabilly 'Sad But True', and Biffy Clyro for their staccato 'Holier Than Thou'. A worthwhile project if you're open-minded.

Howard Johnson

MOTÖRHEAD 'No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith' 40th Anniversary Edition (BMG)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
The original version of 'No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith' was a masterclass in sledgehammer subtlety. Eleven songs spread across two sides of vinyl, it told us everything we needed to know about bassist/vocalist Lemmy Kilmister, guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke, drummer 'Philthy Animal' Taylor, and their entire *raison d'être*. The album topped the British charts four decades ago, establishing the Motörhead brand as an unstoppable juggernaut. Subsequent reissues would exhume some outtakes, but here comes the big daddy of them all. There are permutations to suit every budget, including a four-CD set comprising all three of the concerts originally captured for the album – remastered from producer Vic Maile's original recordings.

WHAT MAIN MAN LEMMY SAID
"I knew it would be the live one that went best, because we're really a live band. You can't listen to a record and find out what we're about. You've got to see us."

ANY EXTRAS?
Priced at £50, the top-of-the-range four-CD version offers the album in original sequence, plus entire sets from Leeds Queens Hall and both nights at Newcastle City Hall. There are also newly unearthed soundcheck renditions of 'Stay Clean', 'Limb From Limb', and 'Iron Horse', making for a whopping 71 songs in total. There are also assorted extras such as a concert poster, tour pass, plectrum, badge, and reproduction ticket. For the same price the triple-vinyl set includes a hardback book crammed with pics and almost 10,000 words of text.

HIGHLIGHTS
It's the feeling of hearing a band at a certain period in time, at the absolute height of its powers, that's the real highlight here. Motörhead released numerous live records, but 'No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith' is the original and the best. Sadly The Three Amigos are no longer around, but crack open a crate of Special Brew, book tomorrow off work, and crank up 'No Sleep...' until the neighbours pound on the wall. Let's remember Motörhead at their unrivalled zenith.

Dave Ling

Photo: Getty Images/Ron Galella

NIGHT RANGER 'ATBPO'

(FRONTIERS)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Bay Area AOR hard rockers Night Ranger return with their first studio album in four years and their 13th overall. 'ATBPO', which stands for 'And The Band Played On', is apparently an ode to making music during the COVID era. The songs were written in early 2020, and for obvious reasons band members recorded separately in their own studios, then collectively reviewed their recordings via Zoom meetings. "The process was strange, but the outcome rocks," says bassist and vocalist Jack Blades.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Well it sounds like vintage 1980s Night Ranger, but now with a bit of a 2020s reboot. And that is a good thing in my book. My view is that working remotely on 'ATBPO' has actually paid massive dividends for the band. Vocals, bass, guitars, drums, and keyboards are all crystal clear in the mix. And while the Night Ranger hooks, melodies, and harmonies may be locked in the '80s, the songs on 'ATBPO' still have lots of venom and bite.

BEST BITS
The standout cut is 'Bring It All Home To Me', with its monstrous Brad Gillis riff working perfectly alongside catchy lyrics such as '*She's like a twisted tornado inside a hurricane.*' This song shows that if anything, Night Ranger have got heavier over the years. Other high points include the uplifting bar room blues rocker 'Hard To Make It Easy', which comes across like a heavy Doobie Brothers track. 'Can't Afford A Hero', meanwhile, takes the pace down a notch and veers off into marvellous 'Sister Christian' territory. And you can't give higher praise than that.

THE VERDICT
For a band that's sold over 17 million albums worldwide it's impressive that Night Ranger are still motivated and are maturing nicely with age. They still love touring and making new music – and long may that continue. Clearly 'you can still rock in America' – and right across the rest of the world for that matter! As far as I'm concerned Night Ranger have delivered their strongest album since 1985's '7 Wishes'.

Xavier Russell

AXEL RUDI PELL 'Diamonds Unlocked II'

(STEAMHAMMER/SPV)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
These days it's almost obligatory for every artist to do at least one covers album. In 2007 Axel Rudi Pell issued his first set of other people's songs on 'Diamonds Unlocked'. Now the German guitarist goes back to his roots once more for another selection of cover tunes. Rather than going for the obvious, though, Pell makes some surprising choices of songs to rework on both LPs. This time round there's Paul Anka's 'She's A Lady', former Rainbow keyboard player Tony Carey's solo hit 'Room With A View', Smokie frontman Chris Norman's 'Sarah (You Take My Breath Away)', and Abba's 'Eagle'.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Axel Rudi Pell has built his reputation on melodic power metal driven by his obvious guitar skills. As you'd expect that's the basis of this album. But far from being a collection of lumpen Euro metal interpretations, the record deliberately features songs that have a certain individuality, and ARP is only too happy to retain it.

BEST BITS
There's a brilliant rendition of Rainbow's 'Lady Of The Lake' from the 'Long Live Rock 'N' Roll' album. Vocalist Johnny Gioeli does a magnificent job recreating Ronnie James Dio's inimitable howl, melding his voice perfectly with Pell's guitar. Crooning classic 'She's A Lady' is given a high-grade hard rock makeover, while the Rolling Stones' 'Paint In Black' is reimagined in a style that brings Deep Purple to mind. Best of all, though, is 'Eagle'. Abba were always skirting round the edges of AOR, and this version of the song proves the point. Without having to tamper with the Swedes' arrangement, 'Eagle' powers and soars here with anthemic, fist-pumping ease.

THE VERDICT
Many covers albums come across as lazy. Well, it saves having to write new songs, doesn't it? But Axel Rudi Pell has put both effort and thought into his choice of numbers and the way he represents them, paying respect to the originals while at the same time putting his own indelible stamp onto them.

Malcolm Dome

ROCK CANDY PICKS

THE STUFF THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION

QUEENSRŸCHE 'Operation: Mindcrime'

(CAPITOL/UME)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
In 1988 Queensrÿche released this, their third album, which would ultimately come to define the Seattle band's career. The conceptual 'Operation: Mindcrime' is now regarded as a progressive metal classic, and its boldness and sophistication have subsequently set the standard in this sub-genre. Now it's reissued in a vastly expanded form, adding exciting extra layers to the original album while at the same time giving listeners greater insight into the overall concept.

WHAT VOCALIST GEOFF TATE SAYS
"Just like any idea, it takes time to fully explain the potential of something. A band is always a very political entity, so I had to do some wheeling and dealing to make it happen. But once I had one guy interested in my idea it kinda snowballed. And [guitarist] Chris [DeGarmo] really launched into it with me."

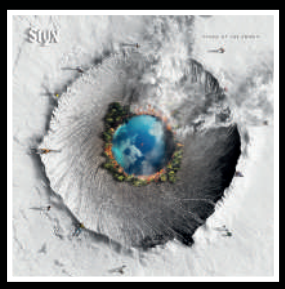
ANY EXTRAS?
Loads of them. The deluxe version features a remaster of the original album, together with extensive liner notes based around a new interview with Tate discussing how '...Mindcrime' came together. Then there are two live recordings from the tour when the band performed the album in its entirety. One of these comes from London's Hammersmith Odeon in 1990, the other from the following year at the Target Center in Wisconsin. There's also a DVD featuring a documentary about the making of the album. For those who merely want to replace or upgrade their collection, basic CD and double-vinyl editions featuring just the original album are also available.

HIGHLIGHTS
Everyone knows that 'Operation: Mindcrime' is a remarkable album, one of the finest conceptual pieces ever recorded, and its tale of mind control and terrorism remains highly relevant today. The original recording still sounds superb all these years later. But the real highlight of this bumper reissue is the live material. Hearing Queensrÿche's musical ambition transferred so successfully to the stage confirms their reputation as a truly outstanding band.

Malcolm Dome

STYX 'Crash Of The Crown'

(ALPHA DOG 2T/UME)



WHAT'S THE STORY?
Emboldened by 2017's 'The Mission', their first collection of original material in 14 years, Styx return with a 17th studio album. Like its predecessor, which told the sci-fi tale of a voyage to Mars in 2033, this is another concept, only this time closer to home. Written largely before the pandemic and adapted to suit the world's challenging circumstances, 'Crash Of The Crown' trumpets "a new era of hope, survival and prosperity." Its intentions are laudable, certainly, though whether the album can provide sufficient cheer for somebody whose life has been derailed by COVID is open for debate.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Pretty much as you'd hope it would. The flamboyant keys of Lawrence Gowan are plastered over just about everything, and guitarist Tommy Shaw has one of those deliciously enticing voices that you'll never tire of hearing. The subject matter of positivity and optimism for the future is nowhere near as cloying as it might sound, and by the end only the most grumpy and miserly of listeners could be left frowning.

BEST BITS
The title track, featuring alternating vocals from guitarist James 'JY' Young, Shaw, and Gowan channelling his best Freddie Mercury impression, is the perfect entry-level appetiser. From the upbeat defiance of 'The Fight Of Our Lives', and even through to the shameless schmaltz of 'Our Wonderful Lives', there are zero clunkers here.

THE VERDICT
'The Mission' was a more than creditable effort, and 'COTC' sees the US/Canadian band ramping up the levels of pomp drama to produce even more satisfying results. Penned mostly by Shaw and band producer/multi-musician Will Evankovich, with contributions from Gowan, this isn't a classic to challenge the heady, mellifluous, multi-platinum-selling albums of Styx's early career. But it *is* a good deal more accomplished than you might expect. No question about it, this is a band that very much has a future as well as a past.

Dave Ling

Photo: IconicPix/George Chin

TOTO 'With A Little Help From My Friends'

(THE PLAYERS CLUB/MASCOT LABEL GROUP)

DVD

WHAT'S THE STORY?
US melodic rockers Toto have gone through a metamorphosis throughout lockdown, with guitarist/vocalist Steve Lukather and vocalist Joseph Williams now leading a new line-up that features multi-instrumentalist Warren Ham, Huey Lewis bassist John Pierce, Snarky Puppy drummer Robert 'Sput' Searight, former Prince keyboard player Dominique 'Xavier' Taplin, and keyboardist/background vocalist Steve Maggiora. This 12-track live offering was recorded at last year's online event from SIR Studios in Los Angeles, with original keyboard player David Paich also along for the ride.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
This might be a new line-up, but with Lukather still at the helm, and pal Williams (currently in his second stint as Toto frontman) having now served for over a decade, what you still hear is the band's unmistakable sound. Toto come across as effortlessly classy and can hold their own against anyone. Even though they're still playing AOR, there's some definite grit in the band's current sound, which suits them well as they enter their fifth decade.

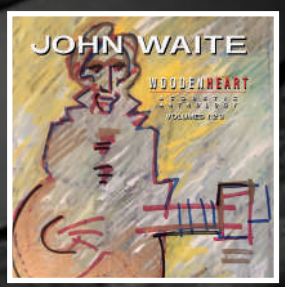
BEST BITS
If you're a fan of the first Joseph Williams-fronted Toto era when he recorded 1986's 'Fahrenheit' and 1988's 'The Seventh One', then there are plenty. Opener 'Till The End' kicks things off with real intent, while 'Pamela' and 'Stop Loving You' are prime AOR. 'Home Of The Brave', meanwhile, proudly shows off its proggy pretensions. 'Hold The Line' and 'Rosanna' are the big hits, of course, but it's deeper cuts like the guitar-driven 'Kingdom Of Desire', 'White Sister' and 'You Are The Flower' – a rarely heard track from the band's 1978 eponymous debut album – that will really excite long-time fans here.

THE VERDICT
Live albums no longer carry the kudos they once did back in the '70s and '80s and this is, of course, a recording of a 'live-in-the-studio' stream. But the album's thoughtful tracklisting makes this release one for Toto diehards to savour.

Jerry Ewing

JOHN WAITE 'Wooden Heart: Acoustic Anthology Vol 1 2 3'

(NO BRAKES RECORDS)



WHAT'S THE STORY?
John Waite's trajectory from his Lancashire roots to the top of the US *Billboard* singles chart in 1984 was a pretty remarkable one. He started off fronting The Babys before going solo and co-penning the number one hit 'Missing You'. But perhaps the coolest thing about Waite is his ability to nurture and refine his voice. Where others have lost their pipes across the years, Waite has continually improved. Here he pulls together a 23-track anthology of previously released 'acoustic only' records.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?
Most of us – me included – have a hard time listening to stripped down versions of known songs, but this is one of those rare exceptions where the simplicity actually benefits the material. Waite could sing the phone book and I'd still be in seventh heaven with every breath and nuance, but it's truly mind-blowing to hear some of these tracks in such naked states. There are no blustery accompaniments, just bare-knuckle interpretations of songs such as 'Missing You', 'Isn't It Time', 'Head First', and 'New York City Girl' that in many ways are transformative reinterpretations of original versions.

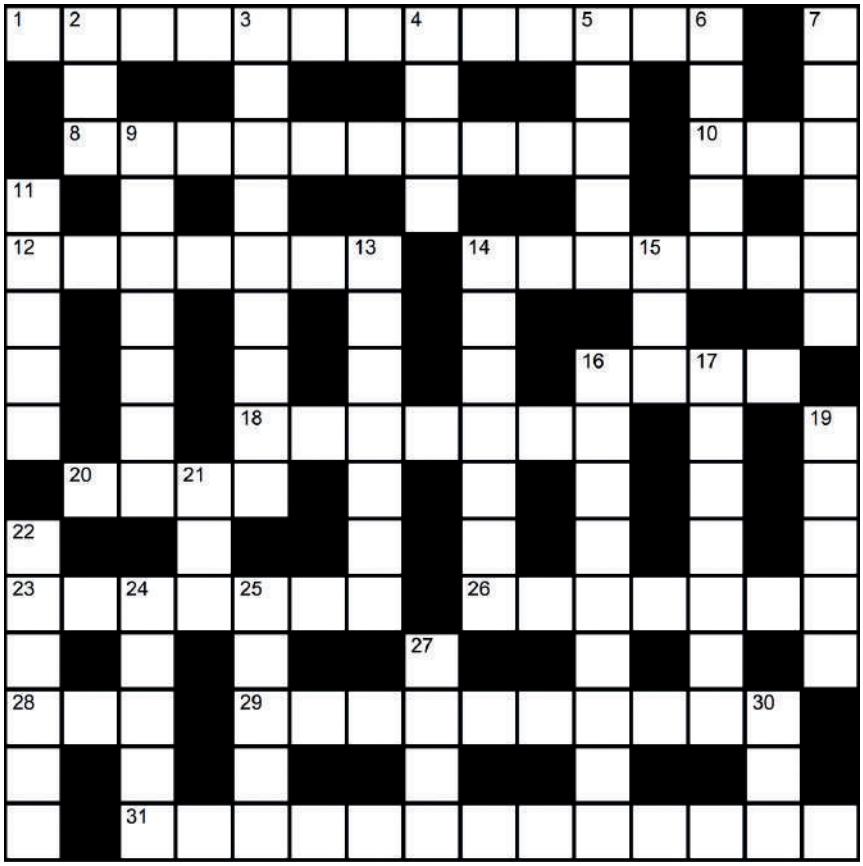
BEST BITS
There are numerous explosive moments, but when all's said and done it's Waite's voice that wins the day. The singer's attention to detail is meticulous and he constructs passages that bridge heartfelt loss, pain, and pathos without a moment of self-doubt. Perhaps the best example of this is 'Catch The Wind', a song originally written and sung by Donovan and the subject of numerous cover versions since. But listening to Waite's version is a like a brand new world coming to life.

THE VERDICT
John Waite is a man who's consistently fought back against corporate manipulation, carving out his own path to the next level of creativity. What he'll do next is anybody's guess, but for now this triple compilation will serve as a great place marker, as well as a springboard for future projects.

Derek Oliver

CROSSWORD

Engage your metal superbrain!



14 ACROSS: THE HENRY PAUL BAND

For answers go to our website www.rockcandymag.com

ACROSS

1 'The -------- -----' is the opening track on Cleveland band Shok Paris's 1989 album 'Concrete Killers'. (8,5)

8 The first three words in the title of a cautionary tale from the 1983 Dio debut album 'Holy Diver'. (4,4,2)

10 Peter Frampton mastered 'The --- Of Control' in 1982. (3)

12 A vibrating song from Cinderella's 1986 'Night Songs' debut. (5,2)

14 The Henry Paul Band's third album, released in 1981. (7)

16 Late-'80s central London glam punks, ---- Roses. (4)

18 This colourful band witnessed 'A Light In The Black' on their 1976 album 'Rising'. (7)

20 Middle initial and surname of a former Ozzy axeman. (1,3)

23 Ted Nugent met a 'Snake -------' on 1979's 'State Of Shock' album. (7)

26 They grabbed a 'Fistful Of Metal' on their 1984 debut album. (7)

28 Guns N' Roses album, 'Live --- '87-'93'. (3)

29 Producer and engineer who worked with Bullseye, Crack The Sky and Yoko Ono. (3,7)

31 Eighties glamsters fronted by Sally Cato. (7,6)

DOWN

2 German metallers --- Max enjoyed a 'Night Of Passion' in 1987. (3)

3 1989 saw melodic rockers Strangeways go for an ill advised 'Walk -- --- ----'. (2,3,4)

4 Texas outfit Dangerous Toys went all Egyptian for 'Queen Of The ----' on their 1989 debut album. (4)

5 Praying Mantis played with 'Beads Of -----' on 1981's 'Time Tells No Lies' LP. (5)

6 "*Wake up San Diego, Milwaukee, -----/Put your two lips together and kiss*," urged Kiss on 1974's 'Kissin' Time'. (5)

7 Surname of long-serving Magnum frontman Bob. (6)

9 Did AOR merchants Point Blank want butter with the title of their 1982 album? (2,1,4)

11 A starry 1985 album from Asia. (5)

13 Stand by for this classic Judas Priest track. (7)

14 According to Lynyrd Skynyrd there's a sweet home in this US state. (7)

15 Kansas gave their '--- Cents Worth' on 1975's 'Masque'. (3)

16 Derringer found pleasure in something naughty on their 1977 second album. (5,4)

17 Geological lines from Anvil's 1983 song 'Forged In Fire': "*Extraction smelters burn --- with phosphorescence*" and "*Metallic rock ore where ---- is present.*" (3,4)

19 ----- Anastasia. This leather-loving late-'80s solo artist was discovered by AOR legend Paul Sabu. (5)

21 Independent UK rock label run by Digby Pearson: ---ache. (3)

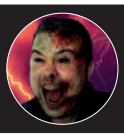
22 Legendary German band responsible for the song 'Son Of A Bitch'. (6)

24 Lung-busting Manowar singer, Eric -----. (5)

25 A one-word tribute to a special lady found on Tygers Of Pan Tang's 1987 album 'Burning In The Shade'. (5)

27 "*Come with me to the Winged ----*," crooned Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull on the band's 1978 track 'Acres Wild'. (4)

30 Crack The ---, an American prog band from Weirton, West Virginia that was formed in the early '70s and is still going strong today. (3)



The *Rock Candy Mag* crossword is compiled by former *Kerrang!* writer **Jason Arnopp**, who recently launched *Possessed By Metal*, a brand new YouTube channel dedicated to the loud stuff, with a strong 1980s skew. Set to feature interviews, rankings, reviews, and lots of vinyl, the channel recently presented a Top 20 list of The Best Dio Songs Ever. Check it out here: **bit.ly/arnopptube**

Photo: Getty Images/Walt Disney Television

SUBSCRIBE TO

ROCK CANDY

HARD, SWEET & STICKY

COME AND JOIN THE *ROCK CANDY MAG* FAMILY!

GET THE MAGAZINE DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME!
SUBSCRIBE AND BUY BACK ISSUES AT
WWW.ROCKCANDYMAG.COM

MAGAZINES DIRECT FROM US INCLUDE A FREE DIGITAL VERSION!
A SUBSCRIPTION COSTS £5.99 PER ISSUE PLUS P&P.
SINGLE ISSUES COST £6.99 PER ISSUE PLUS P&P.
ROCKING GOODNESS DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

SUPPORT THE MUSIC YOU LOVE. SUPPORT *ROCK CANDY MAG*.

COLLECTORS EDITIONS

ROCK CANDY

REMASTERED & RELOADED

OUT NOW

FRANKIE MILLER
'ONCE IN A BLUE MOON'

FRANKIE MILLER - 'HIGH LIFE'

FRANKIE MILLER - 'THE ROCK'

SILENT RAGE
'SHATTERED HEARTS'

SILENT RAGE
'DON'T TOUCH ME THERE'

AVALON - 'EVERYMAN A KING'

WAYSTED - 'VICES'

LION - 'DANGEROUS ATTRACTION'

STRIFE - 'BACK TO THUNDER'

STRIFE - 'RUSH'

WILDLIFE - 'BURNING'

LEGS DIAMOND - 'TOWN BAD GIRL'

LEGS DIAMOND - 'OUT ON BAIL'

LEGS DIAMOND
'LAND OF THE GUN'

GIANT - 'LAST OF THE RUNAWAYS'

THE RODS - 'IN THE RAW'

THE RODS - 'LIVE'

THE RODS - 'LET THEM EAT METAL'

HEAVEN
'WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD'

MOLLY HATCHET - 'S/T'

OHN NORUM - 'TAKING CONTROL'

JOHN NORUM - 'FACE THE TRUTH'

JOHN NORUM
'ANOTHER DESTINATION'

SABU - 'S/T'

SABU - 'HEARTBREAK'

ONLY CHILD - 'S/T'

KEEL - 'THE FINAL FRONTIER'

KEEL - 'S/T'

FASTWAY -'TRICK OR TREAT'

FASTWAY - 'ALL FIRED UP'

FOGHAT - 'FOOL FOR THE CITY'

FOGHAT - 'LIVE'

AVIATOR - 'S/T'

ANGEL - 'WHITE HOT'

ANGEL - 'SINFUL'

ANGEL - 'LIVE WITHOUT A NET'

FRANKIE MILLER - 'FULL HOUSE'

FRANKIE MILLER
'DOUBLE TROUBLE

JOE LYNN TURNER - 'RESCUE YOU'

BRITNY FOX - 'S/T'

DONNIE IRIS
'BACK ON THE STREETS'

www.rockcandyrecords.com / info@rockcandyrecords.com

AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD RECORD STORES OR DIRECTLY TO YOUR DOOR FROM
WWW.ROCKCANDYRECORDS.COM - LOOK OUT FOR SPECIAL OFFERS

CARGO RECORDS
DISTRIBUED BY

COLLECTOR'S EDITION
REMASTERED
& RELOADED

amazon.co.uk
and you're done.